

tion, before He grants or refuses sustenance and deliverance. On behalf of the oppressed and maltreated slaves who are deprived of human rights and human dignity He sends a warning to the throne of the mighty: This slave, this horde of slaves whom from your lofty throne you regard as lower than the lowest of your own subjects, to whom you deny every title to civic rights, to property, to family, to a home of their own, to the free exercise of their abilities, to human dignity and to human existence, whose marriages you break up, whose children you drown, whose flesh you lacerate, whose spirits you darken, whose bodies you crush under the yoke of your forced labour—this slave who crouches under the lash of your taskmasters, under the heavy load of your bricks, בני, he is My child, בכורי, he is the firstborn to My human family, ישראל, he is sent to proclaim “the glory of My majesty,” שלח את עמי ויעבדני set My people free that they may devote their powers to My service. “If you refuse to set them free, you will find Me in front of you, and I will slay your child, your firstborn.”

But the ear of the tyrant remained deaf. “Who is God that I should listen to him?” The finger of this God will stir the water and its stream will become blood and the creatures in it will creep out; it will stir the earth and its dust will come to life and the beast of the forest will come up into the houses of men; it will stir the air and it will rain down pestilence on beasts and boils on men, hail will pour from it and locusts will devastate the fields, and it will be night in the houses of the mighty, while in the house of the slave the sun will be shining. It shows “to the master his Master, it shows how the earth is His, how He is Lord and Master in the midst of the dominion of man upon earth;” it shows how everything belongs to Him, obeys Him, water and earth and air, His word is law, His decision is final, everything goes and comes as He orders. It shows to him the Ruler of the world and the obedience of the universe—but the ear of the tyrant remains deaf.

Then midnight comes and with it the Divine judgment. וגם את הגוי אשר יעבדו דן אנכי judge. “And likewise the nation which they shall serve will I judge.” The warning is fulfilled והצילנו הציל “He has smitten Egypt and delivered our houses, and the slave, the whole people of slaves, is free.”

The slave, the people of slaves, is free. But the slave was to become a man, the horde of slaves was to become a people, through the will and the creative power of God. Let us see what God has handed down as the basis of human and national existence on earth, how He trans-

formed the slave and the horde into a human being and a nation, let us read the “Magna Charta” with which God proclaims Israel’s fundamental rights.

It was on the tenth of Nissan, on “Shabbat Ha-Gadol.” The slave was still a slave, the horde was still a horde. The slave still had no property, no family, no home. The slave is neither husband nor wife, neither father nor mother, neither son nor daughter. The horde has no common life which animates it as a whole, it has no common purpose which unites and organises it. Then God called to the slave, the horde, in the presence of their oppressors, in the presence of their masters He gave them property and house and family and breathed into them the spirit of justice and love—the spirit of justice which protects the individual in the enjoyment of his proper rights, and the spirit of love which links the individual to the living One with the Divine band of freely given devotion. He organised them into a people, a congregation, and a council, and as the central point of this great creation, as its source of power and life, He fixed upon the home.

He did not send heralds with winged—and fleeting—words into the huts of the slaves. He did not write the Magna Charta of Israel on fading parchment; how He was about to communicate to His people the highest and holiest standards of conduct, practice and action, and make them their everlasting possession; how He was about to write in heaven for the rescued world His Noachide covenant with quivering sunrays; how He was about to make good to the family of Abraham the promise of their trial and deliverance given in the “covenant between the pieces;” how He was about to reveal to the sons of Jacob the real significance and the glorious goal of the struggle which like their ancestor they had waged through the night till the morning broke, and to preserve it in the Law which was given them to observe. He spoke to them thus and, and in order to perpetuate the first step in the formation of His people in some concrete act and performance, He said to them: בעשר לחדש הזה ויקחו להם איש שה לבית אבת שה לבית, “On the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb according to their fathers’ houses, a lamb for a household.” In this way He recognised them as possessors of property and independence; He recognised the holy tie of blood upwards to the “house of the fathers” and downwards to the individual house. And as He raised justice as His holy banner for the protection of the “house” from attack and desertion, לא תוציא מן הבית מן הבשר חרצה, “Thou shalt not

carry forth aught of the flesh out of the house," so He "joined" house to house by the bond of brotherhood, of free association, of mutual support and protection.

... ואם ימעט הבית מהיות משה ולקח הוא ושכנו... "If the household be too little for a lamb, then shall he and his neighbour next unto his house take one according to the number of souls." (Exodus 12,6.) He thus bade them utilise the surplus of one house to supply the deficiency of its neighbour, to find support and supplement for the deficiency of one house in the surplus of the other. In this way, since the performance of a duty was to act as a unifying force, and since love and justice were to stand next to one another in their full stature, neither the rich man nor the poor would in this free union have to forfeit anything of the independence, the worth and the significance of his own personality; במכסה נפש "the number of souls"—rather it was in this very sacrifice and union that each one would attain to the highest consciousness of his own personality.

This was the boon of the Great Sabbath. For four days each one learnt to think of himself as a free man, as a link in a family chain which reached backwards into the past, and as the starting point of a family life which was to be woven further into the future. He learnt to count himself and to let himself be counted, and to count the souls great and small with whom he was united as the trunk, bough, branch and twig of a continuous family life. Each one learnt to know and to practise the justice which protected his own domestic circle and gave an equal right of protection to that of his neighbour. At the same time, too, he learnt to understand and to carry out the duty of mutual love which was to unite these circles, each with its own separate rights, through mutual concession and understanding, and to join house with house not like a row of rings lying separately next to each other but like the links in a closely knit chain of love.

והיה לכם למשמרת עד ארבעה עשר יום לחדש הזה: "And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month." (Exodus 12,6.) The will of God had already given them freedom; the blood had given them family life, the possession of rights had formed them into sections, and love had united the various sections. Now came the common history and the common task and purpose, and formed the individuals, the families, the homes and chain of homes into a people. ושחטו אהו כל קהל עדת ישראל. "And the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at even."

The strong arm of God which delivered them all from the same misery, and raised them and bore them further on the eagle's wings of its power and grace, the single God-illuminated past, present and future in which they were all henceforth to find the basis of their existence as a people, their common historical background made them into "Israel," the people which revealed to the world the rule of God. Participation in a single task devolving upon all alike and in conjunction banded together all the separate members of this people, all the representatives of the various sections, into a קהל, a community, and summoned the oldest and most competent of them to an עדה, a council, a permanent and ever-ready focus and centre of this community.

And now ושחטו אהו כל קהל עדת ישראל, all these souls, all these houses, families, circles, the whole person in all its ramifications had to bring an offering of dedication. All were summoned to be "שה," the flock of one shepherd, "חמים," wholly and completely, with every side of their nature both physical and spiritual, transient and permanent, "זכר" as free, strong and independent men, "בן שנה" following their eternal shepherd in the freshness and modesty of a perpetual youth.

This idea of consecration is stamped on the life of the individual, the home, the family, the community, and the people. It realises itself throughout that life, just as the whole tree repeats itself in the trunk, the bough, the branch, the leaf and the seed.

These are some lines from the great Magna Charta with which God, after awakening His people from death, established it in eternal life. But the centre of this noble structure, the blessed soil on which the seed of all this national life was to be developed, and on which freedom and justice and love, family ties, communal feeling and outlook, the national spirit and unquestioning obedience and devotion to the one Shepherd of all were to be tended with priestly care and ministrations; this soil was not the Temple nor was it the State. The sanctuary on the altar of which the fire of this whole Divine institution was to be perpetually kept burning was the home; as our Rabbis say: ולקחו מן הדם ונתנו על שתי המזוזות, נמצינו לומדין ששלשה מזבחות היו לאבותינו במצרים המשקוף ושתי המזוזות From the words "they shall take the blood and put on the two side-posts and on the lintel" we learn that our ancestors had three altars in Egypt: the lintel and the two side-posts. Our ancestors received מזווח and משקוף as altars in Egypt. משקוף, the lintel, indicates the roof that isolates the space occupied by man from the elements without; מזווח, the doorposts, indicate the walls which mark off the

space belonging to the individual from that of society; both together make up the idea of the house.

And the lessons which Israel learnt in that first solemn midnight, the sacred rites which Pessach hallowed for him as his own possession, היא שעמדה לאבותינו ולנו, these have remained with us and with our fathers, it is these which have triumphantly sustained our fathers and ourselves in the midst of all the storms and changes of time. All our other altars have fallen into decay, all our sanctuaries have been lost to us. But the home which Pessach brought back to us, and the angels which Pessach invited into the home—the mutual affection of children and parents and husband and wife, the sense of freedom and justice, brotherhood, concord, co-operation and nationhood, trust in God and loving obedience and devotion to God—the home and these spirits of the Jewish home have remained our eternal possessions, and it is these which confer upon us, the resurrected people, immortality.

From now on this reborn people had not to fear another death. It could forfeit its State, it could lose its land, its Temple would be reduced to ashes, its altar to ruins, and it might itself be scattered over the whole world. Where it could build its houses, where it could establish its homes, where it could gather its members in domestic circles, where the most lonely of this people could pitch his solitary tent, there it had saved its home, its Jewish and God-fearing home, its family life and, if it was very fortunate, its communal life, and with it were saved all the spirits that it had for ever acquired in the hour of its rebirth to consecrate, protect, purify, save and bless it, and that still form the pride and the jewel of the eternal people. . . . על שום מה . . . פסח . . . אשר פסח על בתי בני ישראל במצרים בנגפו אח מצרים ואח בתינו הציל פסח. Thus we mention Pessach: "For that He passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses." (Exodus 12,27.)

## 2. מצה

Free and independent, guarded by God's providence, led by God's guidance, tested and weighed by God's judgment, the reborn people, strengthened in justice, united in love, hallowed by consecration, was to develop in ever-youthful freshness and gladness its family, communal and national life. In this life, penetrated through and through

with the idea of the one and only God, raised high above all earthly changes and vicissitudes on the mighty pinions of the one and only Guardian, it was in quiet seclusion to celebrate the festivals of its domestic paradise, until at the end of days its fellow-men should "break their swords and shiver their lances" and make pilgrimages to the shining light of the God of Jacob, in order to learn from Him also His ways, and instead of sword and lance, spear and armour, to invite into their houses the spirit of justice and love, of freedom and holiness, and with them to regain the lost paradise on earth.

But what if this reborn people also should once forget its origin, if the centuries spent in night and darkness should more and more fade from its memory, if it should forget how it had lain on the earth "perishing in its blood" and had only been awakened to new life by the all-powerful call of God? What if it should forget to whom it owed its new life and to whom it belonged with every thread of its new life? What if the descendants of this new-born people were to recognise as the dominant forces in their history, in their family, communal and national life, only the same elements as they discerned in all other phenomena of human society, so that, if the memory of older times crossed their minds, they did not sing hallelujah to God but wreathed the temples of their ancestors with laurels, praising their forefathers as heroes and Moses as a demigod and saying "Our hand is exalted and not the Lord hath wrought all this" דינו רמה ולא ה' פעל כל זאח.

And what if the living God-idea which ought to penetrate and sustain their whole family, communal, and national life grew fainter and fainter? What if along with it they lost their hold on freedom and justice, love and holiness, those transforming, purifying, strengthening and inspiring guardian angels which ought to make of the domestic hearth of this new-born people an eternal paradise, whereas in truth the thorns and thistles of the lost paradise flourished on the soil of this people also?

Was not the earth then once a paradise? Did not the heaven of peace once encircle the newly created race of man, and did not the majesty of God walk in the garden of man? How brief was the sunshine of this paradise; how soon did sensuality banish man from his paradise; how soon did envy clench the fist of one brother to murder the other, and ambition impel men to build their vainglorious tower! The words "Envy, lust and

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