



Pesach and Spring: Part I

Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

There is a deep association between the holiday of Pesach and the season of the year it falls in. In Shemot the Torah says, “*Hayom atem yotzim b’chodesh ha’aviv.*” (Today you are going out in the month of spring.) We have an obligation to celebrate Pesach in the spring, and we set occasional leap years to ensure that Pesach will always fall out in spring.

Rav Hirsh describes spring in a poetic way. As nature comes to life, people rejoice. They stroll through the forest enjoying the sound of the wind as it whistles through the trees, inhaling the fragrant scent of flowers and listening to the chirping of the birds. But how pathetic would our faith be if our heart would delight in the song of spring while forgetting the connection to the revelation of the Divine. If we live spring in the physical domain and forget its spiritual aspect, the end is death. Spring, although very beautiful, is always short and fleeting.

How do we define spring on a symbolic level? Is there a way to make it everlasting? When we think of the ideal state of mankind we define it as spring, a state of peace, prosperity, and good relationships. There may be idyllic short periods of time but they don’t last. Somehow mankind can’t find the formula to achieve it. In contrast, the Jewish spring comes on its own. Pesach comes upon us every year regardless of our situation. Rav Hirsh quotes from Tehilim, “*Seu shearim rosheichem.*” In spring the gates open to

welcome the King of glory. Spring is the revelation of the divine, when Hashem comes into our homes and hearts.

Hashem himself redeemed us on the night of Pesach as the Hagada says, “*Ani v’lo acher.*” All of us, regardless of our circumstances, recite the paragraph of the four expressions of redemption at the Seder which ends with, “I took you out and I took you to me you to became one with me.” At the end of *Magid* we bless Hashem for taking us out, “From slavery to freedom, from sadness to happiness, from darkness to great light, from slavery to redemption.” That is spring. It’s an everlasting idyllic state that repeats itself every year wherever we may be.

The Torah says in Shemot, “*Haleila hazeh shimurim l’kol Bnei Yisrael l’dorotam.*” This night is a night of protection to all of the Jewish people for all generations. Rav Hirsh explains that *leil shimurim* connotes that Hashem continues to protect the world moment by moment. He created this world for a purpose and He enables us to bring it to its destiny. When the Jews were oppressed in Egypt, it seemed as if the great vision of the Jewish nation had been decimated. But in truth they were only going through the stage of winter. Winter is a time when nature prepares for spring, although it isn’t visible. Without this prior groundwork, it would be impossible for a tree that was completely bare to suddenly burst into full bloom. No matter how low we might fall, Hashem is sustaining us. He

observes and collects every good choice we make and puts it in his treasure house. This ensures that eventually the world will come to its purpose.

Rav Hirsh writes, “The sparks of light increased in the darkness of exile.” In times of difficulty, our spiritual potential is revealed. We were purified seven fold in the smelting pots of Egypt. The Jewish people are described in *Shir Hashirim* as *gan na’ul*, a locked garden. They remained separate from the Egyptian nation, preserving their morality. They didn’t change their names, language, or clothes. The women had incredible faith. Hashem watched and accumulated their merits until those who wanted to destroy them collapsed. At the time of the exodus, the Jewish people began a journey that would bring all of mankind to spring.

We begin the Hagada with “*Ha lachma anya.*” This is the bread of the poor. Attaining a state of spring has nothing to do with what we have or don’t have. It has to do with what’s inside us. If we create a dwelling place for Hashem within us, we can create an everlasting spring regardless of our circumstances. In terms of what the nations would define as the idyllic stage, it may be spring for the moment, but if Hashem is not there it won’t last. May we merit to tap into the joyous aura of spring and Pesach and may its spirit of everlasting redemption accompany us throughout the year.



Pesach and Spring: Part 2

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The Jews endured horrific persecution in Egypt. Six hundred thousand able bodied men left Egypt. Yet while they were still enslaved, the Egyptians could take their newborn babies and throw them in the Nile with nary a whisper of rebellion. How did this happen? The Egyptian nation was a descendant of Cham, who was cursed to be a slave of slaves. Cham's great grandson was Nimrod. Rashi explains that he was called Nimrod because he rebelled against Hashem and forced others to do the same. The people of Cham denied Hashem so that they could pursue their animalistic desires without a conscience. Those who are slaves to their desires will enslave others to fulfill their desires and that is the difficult reality the Jewish people found themselves in.

It seems as if the Jews had achieved their goal after they were redeemed. But Hashem said no. Your mission is just beginning. Spiritual redemption unlike physical redemp-

tion is ongoing. The Torah tells us, "If your son will ask in the future, 'What is this all about?' you should tell him, 'With a strong hand Hashem took us out of Egypt from the house of slavery.'" The Jews were completely passive. It was impossible for a slave to escape from Egypt. Only Hashem could take them out. This teaches us that no matter what situation a person finds himself in, even if he is at the lowest point and sees no way out, he can be redeemed at any moment. It doesn't matter what a person can or cannot do. When Hashem feels we are ready for redemption He will take us out with a strong hand.

In Tehilim the verse says, "*Barchu Hashem malachav giborei koach osei devaro.*" (You should bless Hashem, o angels, mighty warriors who do His work.) All of nature are Hashem's messengers who fulfill His command. Throughout the winter every aspect of creation is hard at work fulfilling its task. In spring we see the results. If we also want to

achieve the coveted state of spring, we need to commit to the will of Hashem. But unlike all of nature, which fulfills Hashem's commands instinctively, we can choose to do so out of our own free will. Although we may suffer we can still feel spring in our heart because we know it is leading us to our purpose. Hashem is constantly watching and counting our good deeds. Good choices made in difficult times hold greater value and tip the scales more quickly than a good deed under easy circumstances.

If we fulfill our destiny, we can bring ourselves and the world to its purpose. The key is fulfilling the will of Hashem. That helps us create a connection with Him and in turns brings Him into our hearts and homes. This is the secret of achieving everlasting spring. No matter what the situation, there is hope. And when we feel hope, we can feel inner joy and serenity.