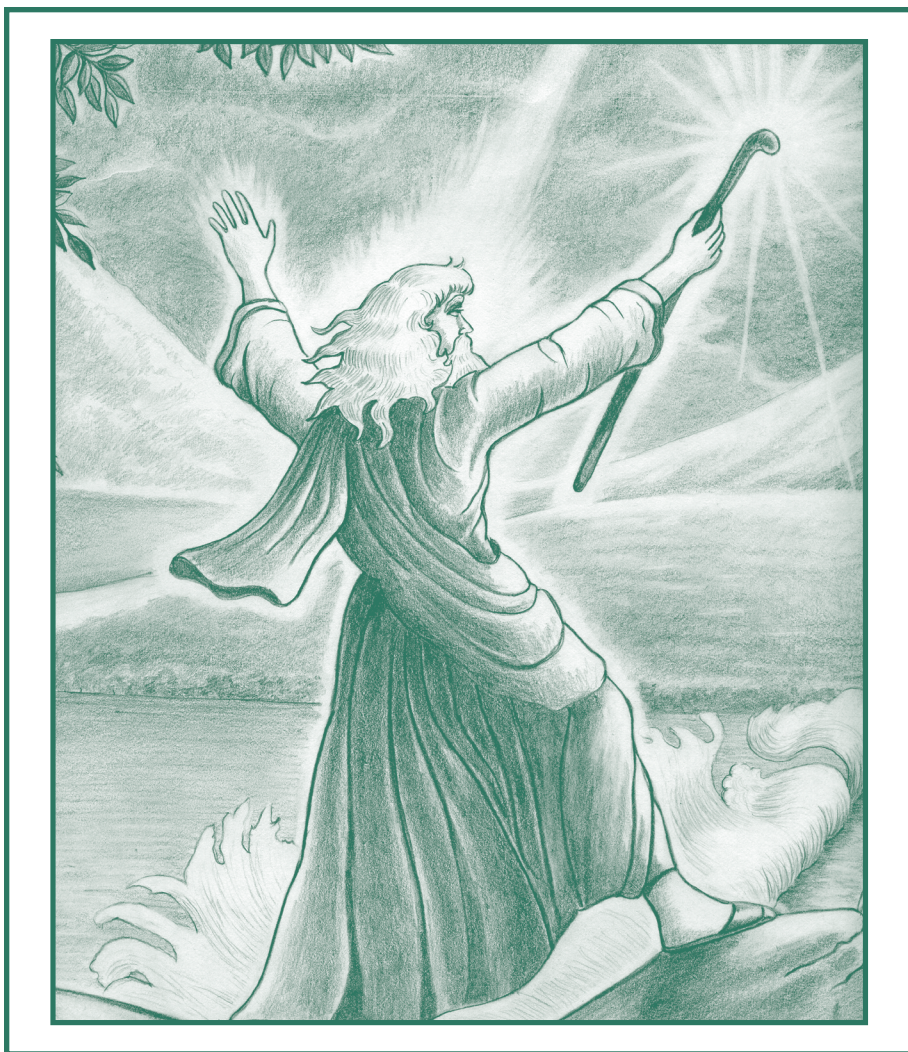


The Message of Passover

We can all appreciate the Old Testament message of the Passover— a message of deliverance, a message of freedom. The Hebrews were confined and enslaved in Egypt when Moses came with his words of profound hope. He initiated a process of release, but the Pharaoh would not let the people go. As a result, one after another, great calamities befell the royal establishment of the Pharaoh.

Mystically speaking, the story of the Exodus is not the story of a race. Scriptures are not meant for historical purposes. When we look very closely at the writers of scriptures, we usually discover that they are poor historians. Their intention is rather to lead you to Liberation. Therefore, the significance behind the story of the Passover is spiritual and the affliction of the Egyptians signifies a movement in darkness caused by ignorance.

In a certain episode, Moses asked his brother to hold out a rod and the pure Nile River became defiled and colored with blood, symbolizing how ignorance



Every religious festivity has a mystic implication and message. If it is a real festivity, it will remind a person of his values and goals, and the purpose for which he exists.

If you study the different religious scriptures without bias, you will find each to be like a stream that leads you to the same ocean of universal understanding. No religion is greater or lesser, but all are like so many flowers in a garden, each having its own fragrance.

The rose cannot assert, “I am the best!” and the jasmine cannot dance and say, “I am more wonderful than all!” Every flower adds enchantment and beauty. Similarly, in the heavenly garden, different religions emphasize different themes that are of special importance.

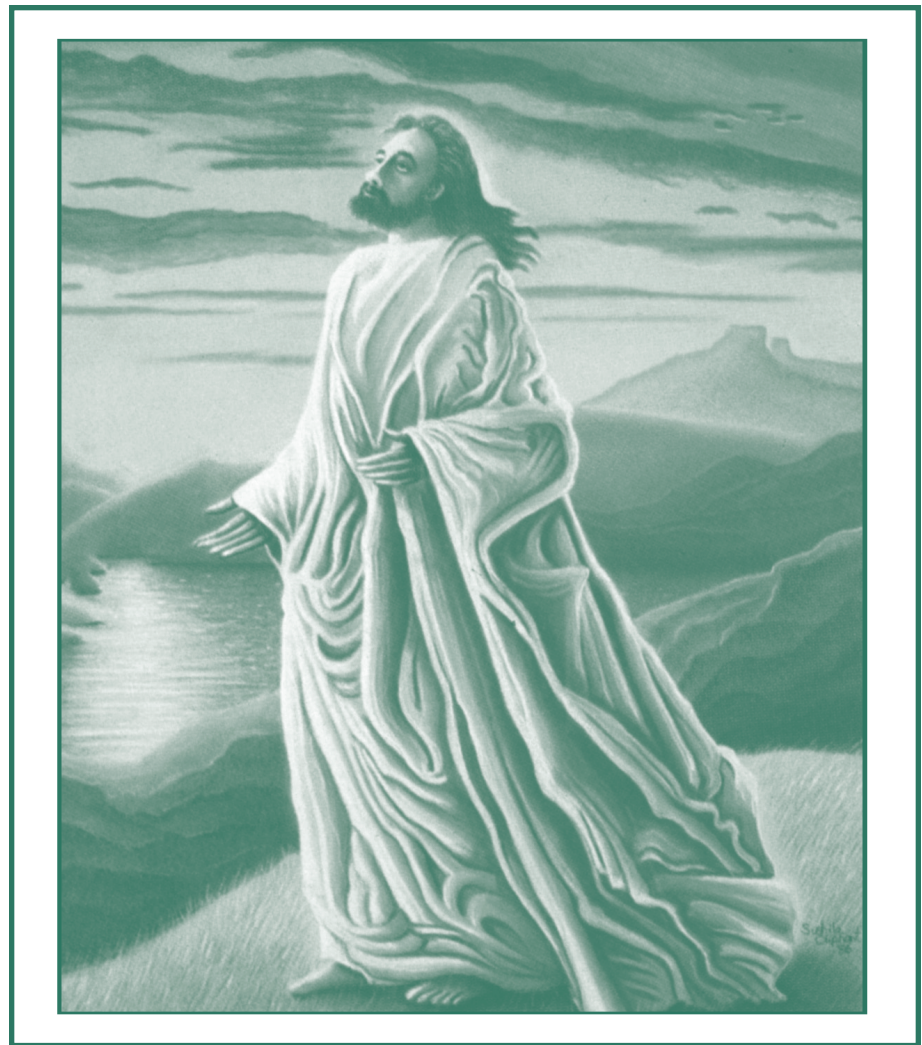
The Triumph

Message for Easter and Passover

colors the stream of the mind with egoism. Then, once ego has dominated the mind, pestilence develops. Frogs of worry and anxiety, locusts of distraction, and diseases of anger, greed and hatred all invade the human mind. They are all God-sent troubles, and yet still the spirit is not awakened — the dark power does not release the bright forces within the human heart.

Thus Moses repeatedly reveals the Divinely inspired power until finally, at the time of the Passover, the angel of death strikes all the first born of the Egyptians. This event symbolizes the destruction of negative impressions in the human mind. These impressions, or karmic seeds, if left unchecked will go on reproducing without end. But there comes a stage when God afflicts these seeds in such a way that they become ineffective and lifeless.

On the other hand, goodness, symbolized by the Hebrew race, is spared and preserved. That goodness is passed over and thereby triumphs over death. Death swept across the land, destroying all the first born, but God's chosen people were unaffected.



The Hebrews colored their doors with the blood of a lamb. This is symbolic of coloring the mind with devotion, a process in which the lower self within is sacrificed. If the mind is so colored and good qualities unfold, then an act of Divine magic takes place. While death and mortality

run rampant, the spirit within triumphs.

The Red Sea represents the distance that has developed between the spirit's embodied state and its real state. It is the gulf of the unconscious and must give way to one's essential nature. Deep within you lies immense Divine power, and all good forces remain imprisoned in your unconscious. If you turn your face to God, you release that power. If you learn the art of living a Divine life, those

Of the Spirit

By Sri Swami Jyotirmayananda

forces will unfold and you will discover that great purpose for which you have come to exist. That purpose is deliverance, release, or Liberation.

When the Red Sea parted, Moses sang, “The Lord is my strength and song...I will prepare him a habitation”—implying that he would prepare his heart to receive God with great exaltation. Divinity is not a raw expression of power, but a song, a melody. Your whole personality changes when the Divine Self unfolds within you. That is the purpose for which everyone exists.

The Message of Easter

The same truths unfold through the life of Jesus, which embodies the whole process of spiritual movement, and shows how one can always be in tune with the Absolute. By stating, “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you,” Christ proclaimed that Liberation is not somewhere

else, but right here in your heart. By studying the events in the life of Jesus, we gain insight into many of the profound spiritual truths that must be understood in order to attain that goal of Liberation.

One of those truths points to the perishability of everything in the world — as contrasted with the imperishability of the Spirit. Sooner or later, everything you touch in this world will perish. Something you cling to may look wonderful now, but those qualities are only superficial and transient. If you rely on the objects of the world for your happiness, you are going to be frustrated. That is an unalterable law. However, there is no harm in enjoying objects of the world, as long as this enjoyment is coupled with an intention to outgrow them and discover the source of all happiness in *Brahman*, the Divine Self.

The resurrection of Jesus shows that he is incorruptible: he does not perish. He was tortured and crucified and his body was

secured behind a rock — and still, he rose again. Whether or not one believes that Jesus literally rose from the dead, he can be thrilled by that miracle as a testimony to the taintlessness and the incorruptibility of the Spirit within us all.

Jesus was established in the awareness that he was not the body, but Spirit. The same is true of Kabira, a 15th century Saint of India. He had two types of followers, Hindu and Moham-medan. When he died, both claimed his body. The Moham-medans wanted to bury his body, considering him their Guru, and the Hindus wanted to cremate him. So a great quarrel ensued.

After a while, one of them lifted the shroud covering the dead body and they found that it was gone; what remained was only flowers. So it was easy to reconcile the argument — half the flowers went to the Hindus for cremation and half went to the Mohammedans for burial.

Aspirants become firmly rooted in this understanding



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when they realize that they have two types of birth. One is the normal birth, which terminates in death. The other is a spiritual birth which becomes effective when you enter the spiritual path. Being born spiritually, you overcome death, because you are no longer the body. That is the message of the resurrection.

The potential to resurrect lies in every human being and every Sage reminds you of that potential. Deep within lies the incorruptible Self, the taintless Spirit, the pure *Atman*, and you can realize that *Atman* even within this lifetime.

Through his crucifixion, Christ symbolizes the effacement of ego and presents that attainment as a great challenge to all spiritual aspirants. As you purify your reason and learn to introspect deeply, you begin to see how many egoistic illusions and irrational thought processes abide within the mind. Due to the pressure of ego and an erroneous sense of individuality, so many negative things develop in life.

Hatred, greed and selfishness torture human relationships and make the world chaotic.

The message of every religion is to transcend that false sense of individuality, to discover the universal stream of life, and to realize that it is possible for you to unfold cosmic love. As Jesus taught, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Matthew 22: 37-39). Even to those who crucified Him, Christ directed his unrestricted goodwill.

A simple teaching was given by Ramana Maharshi, a great Sage in India. One day, thieves entered his ashram and stole certain things and beat him as well. Seeing this, an outraged disciple said, "I am going to find those thieves and break their necks!" However, the Sage said, "Do not do so! If your teeth were to bite your tongue, would you knock them out? No,

you wouldn't, because they are a part of yourself. Rather you would console them."

Similarly it is possible for you to develop an awareness that every creature is as much a part of yourself as are your teeth, fingers, or toes. The moment you view the world as an organic whole, you become one with all. How can there be selfishness, anger, greed, and various other impurities in such a mind?

If the vision of universal love is promoted, society will prosper. All that is wonderful and great will flow from that vision. Through the example of his life, Lord Jesus urges all people to attain that vision by making every effort to crucify the ego. Realizing the Divine harmony and universality of life is an attainment more glorious than climbing Mt. Everest, more exhilarating than stepping onto the moon. It is more powerful than hydrogen bombs, and more enduring than time itself. May you receive the choicest blessings of the Divine Self!

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