

THE STORY THAT WAS NOT ALLOWED TO BE FORGOTTEN

The answer to the above questions may perhaps surprise the reader. But I am sure he will be glad to know it. It will throw a new light upon one of the most vital episodes of Jewish history.

The things we are doing to the Matzo and the Wine is a story in action, or a drama, of something that happened long ago, about someone that lived long ago.

This story is told in secret, as it were, because the people were afraid to tell it openly. And for centuries Jewish lips were forbidden to utter the name of the hero of that story or to reveal its source.

That story, however, could not be forgotten. It became indelibly enshrined in the soul of Israel. In order to keep it alive and fresh, it was re-enacted year after year at the Seder which is the most sacred and the most religious occasion of the Jewish home. It waited until the book where that story is written could be opened and read without fear. That book is the Book of the New Testament. It is the book which tells of the Life, the Teaching, the Suffering, the Death and the Resurrection of Jesus, the Jewish Messiah!

THE CORE AND THE SUBSTANCE OF THE SEDER

About three decades before the destruction of the Second Temple (A.D. 70) we are told that Jesus, at the close of His career, went with His disciples to an upper room in Jerusalem to keep the Passover with them. Someone present on that occasion describes the incident in the following words:

As they were eating [at the close of the supper] Jesus took bread [Matzo] and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, take, eat; this is my body.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:26-28).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

In these few sentences which describe the institution of the Christian Passover or the Lord's Supper, the answers to the questions we asked above are found:

Why does the Jew, while eating the piece of Matzo which is called "Aphikomen," believe (according to the Shulchan Aruch) that is he eating the PESACH (or the Passover Lamb)?

The origin of this idea is not found in the Talmud; it comes from the New Testament. It is *because* Jesus took bread (Matzo) and said: "This is my body." It is He who gave His disciples bread and told them, as they were eating it, to believe that they were eating the Korban Pesach (Sacrifice of the Passover). He, the Messiah, was the true Korban Pesach. It was from Him that the Rabbis learned to make such an identification.

Some Jewish readers at this point might protest and cry: "This is impossible! Jews would never do such a thing!" Yet it is so. The New Testament undoubtedly is the source and origin of the essential features of the Jewish Seder. What follows will dispel any further doubt in the matter.

To continue:

Why are there three Matzos on the Seder table, and *why* is the middle matzo broken?

The customary explanation for the presence of the three Matzos is that they represent the three groups in Israel: the Cohens, the Levites, and the Israelites. But if that be the case, why is the middle Matzo broken, wrapped and hidden (a recent Jewish writer uses the term "buried" instead of "hidden"), and then recovered from the hiding place and shared among the members of the family? Why also is it called by the mysterious name, *Aphikomen*? What has all this to do with the Levites? Nothing like this has happened to them!

But every single act done to that middle Matzo is a description of what happened to Jesus. It is therefore He whom the Aphikomen represents. And all the three Matzos are symbolical of the threefold

revelation of the Godhead according to the Bible: God the Father and Creator, God the Saviour or Redeemer, and God the Holy Spirit. The middle Matzo which represents Jesus is therefore broken. He was broken when He was crucified!

Why is the broken Matzo wrapped in a cloth and hidden? *Because* the disciples of Jesus, when He died on the cross, took His body down, wrapped it in grave clothes and placed it in a tomb.

Why is the broken Matzo, called Aphikomen, recovered from its hiding place? *Because* on the third day God raised Jesus from the grave in His resurrection from the dead.

Why is the Aphikomen eaten as the last act of the Seder? *Because* other parallel reports of this incident inform us that this institution of the "Lord's Supper" took place at the close of the meal in the upper room in Jerusalem.

And finally, *Why* is the Aphikomen shared among all the members of the family? *Because* the followers of Jesus are regarded as the family of God; and Jesus had said to them "Take, eat!" *He is the bread of life to all who believe in HIM.*

THE WINE THAT WAS RED

The incident related in the New Testament also answers the questions with reference to the Wine on the Seder table.

Why is wine necessary and essential for the Seder? *Because* Jesus took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to His disciples.

Why is the wine to be red, resembling blood? *Because* Jesus said: "This is my blood of the New Testament, shed for many for the remission of sins."

Why is it mandatory that every Jew should drink wine at the Seder? *Because* Jesus said: "Drink ye all of it."

THE MYSTERY OF THE APHIKOMEN

What is the meaning of this mysterious word "Aphikomen"? It looks like a Greek word. Most scholars are agreed that it is, but different opinions