



Unity Church of Christianity
To Pass Over
April 17, 2011

Howard Caesar

We're at the time of Passover right now, which is the 15th day of the month. It lasts for seven or eight days and is one of the most widely observed and important Jewish holidays. Jesus was a Jew, and it is said that the Lord's Supper was the celebrating of the Passover.

I'd like to share a bit of the story that leads up to what Passover is about and then go deeper. At the end of the Biblical book of Genesis, Joseph, one of the patriarchs, brings his family to Egypt. Over many centuries, the descendants of Joseph's family grew—the Hebrews. They became so numerous that a new king coming into power had great fears about what might happen if these Hebrews decided to rise up against the Egyptians. Pharaoh decided that the way to avoid that was to enslave them. So that's what happened. But despite Pharaoh's attempts to avoid this situation, they continued to multiply and have lots of children. As their numbers grew, Pharaoh came up with another plan, which was to send soldiers to kill all of the newborn male babies born to Hebrew mothers.

This is where Moses begins. In order to save Moses, his mother and sister put Moses in a little basket in the stream. Their hope was that someone would find him and raise him as their own. It's ironic, but it was Pharaoh's daughter who found Moses and raised him as her own. The irony of it is that he was a Hebrew child being raised as a prince of Egypt.

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Moses grew up and killed an Egyptian guard who he found beating one of the Hebrew slaves. Moses had to flee into the desert. There, he hooked up with the family of Jethro, a Midian priest, and married her daughter. He lived there for a good while as a shepherd, out in the wilderness. Moses met with God there, and it's the voice of God that comes to him in the burning bush and calls to him. Moses said, "Here am I." God tells Moses that he has been chosen to be the one to free the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt. Moses said he wasn't too sure he was the one. God reassured Moses and said, "No, you're the one. I'll be there to help you and so will your brother Aaron."

Soon after that, Moses returned back to Egypt. He confronted Pharaoh, demanding that he release the Hebrews from bondage. Of course, Pharaoh refused. As a result, you have the 10 plagues that came upon Egypt. The plagues are, in this order: the waters of Egypt all turned to blood, frogs swarmed the land of Egypt, gnats or lice invaded all of the Egyptian homes, there were wild animals causing all kinds of destruction to the lands, there was Pestilence, there were boils, there was hail—severe weather destroying the crops, locusts came and ate the crops, there was darkness for three days in Egypt, and the firstborn of each Egyptian family was killed—even the firstborn of the Egyptian animals.

The tenth plague is where the Jewish holiday of Passover gets its name, because while the angel of death visited Egypt, it passed over the Hebrew homes—those which had been marked with lamb's blood on the doorposts.

After the tenth plague, Pharaoh finally relented and released the Hebrews. They were all free and leaving Egypt, and again, Pharaoh changed his mind. He sent soldiers after them, which is where the Red Sea and the parting of the Red Sea come in. The Hebrews were finding their way through. Once they got to the other side, the soldiers were engulfed where the water came crashing back in.

Basically, after they crossed that water, the Hebrews began the next part of their journey, which was in search of the Promised Land. That has its implications metaphysically and its deep meaning. This is the story of the Passover and we seek to honor that tradition, as one of the most widely observed Jewish holidays.

Emilie Cady is a Unity author who wrote one of the early Unity books that has been around for a long time. It's called *Lessons in Truth*. In the book, she addresses this Bible story from the standpoint that it is somehow really about our own personal journey in spiritual consciousness and unfoldment. She says, "Every man and every woman believes themselves to be in bondage of some sort. All of our suffering comes from this—from the belief of being in bondage." The history of the children in Israel coming out of their long bondage in Egypt is really descriptive of the human mind or one's consciousness. Growing up and out of the sense part of man—the part of man that is focused on all information coming through the five sense—into the spiritual part of man, which is referred to as the Promised Land.

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There is a conversation that goes on between God and Moses in which God says, “I have seen the affliction of my people that are in Egypt, and I have heard their cry by reason of their task masters, and I know their sorrows, so I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and bring them out of that land into a good, large land flowing with milk and honey.”

The message here is that the land is a state of consciousness. All of us are to be moving out of a land of bondage and slavery to all the limited ideas that we hold about ourselves and life, into a good, more expansive land that is filled with the truth and is flowing with milk and honey, which symbolically means our Promised Land. The Promised Land is your connection to the Divine. It is attunement with the presence and power and truth that God is.

The message that we must get in this story that Emilie Cady and others have depicted, is that it’s really about us. When you read these stories, you can’t look at them as only historical. They’ve been passed along for a reason. They’re really talking about all of our spiritual journeys, not just externally, but internally as well. The message is to get us to realize that there is a presence and a power at work in us. It is growing us to the extent that we’re willing to give ourselves to that growth and unfoldment process. It is delivering us up and out of the hands of our own, current-day Egyptians and bondage. It brings us up and out of that land, onto to a larger, more expansive land that symbolically represents the flowing of milk and honey—the flowing of more good. That is our journey. Even when we can’t see it by appearances, that is what’s going on. No matter how difficult the circumstances may be, we are, at all times, in this process of moving up and out of an old, limited sense of suffering, and we are moved toward a greater good. That’s why we say the nature of God is good. As you relate to and identify with the truth of God, it only moves you to a greater good.

We all have a pharaoh who speaks for us inside. It is a pharaoh of fear. It argues for separation. It tells you what you can’t do and is always worried about the external, taking you to the five senses. It’s the same way that the pharaoh was worried about power and having to take action externally. It keeps us in bondage. The pharaoh represents the voice of ego that edges God out.

All of us also have a Moses, as well as a pharaoh. It depends on who’s going to dominate and who we will listen to. Moses is that part of you and me that wants to listen to God and the voice of intuition, but it may argue with everything externally. How in the world am I going to lead those people out of bondage in Egypt? How in the world am I going to get out of my mess that I’m faced with in this life? Am I willing to listen? Am I willing to believe that there will be help there from the Divine and from people in and around me as I embrace what is next?

I’d like to talk to you about some other kinds of pass-overs, as well. There’s another kind of pass-over that is what we do to other human beings, unfortunately. Have you ever felt passed over? Have you ever felt forgotten or left out? Have you ever felt you were judged inadequate—you didn’t measure up? Have you ever felt inferior, labeled, or excluded? Perhaps you experienced that in youth. You didn’t get picked on the team.

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I can relate to that. I've told you before that I love sports. In 5th and 6th grades, I'd ride my bike two miles to the playground. I'd get there about 45 minutes early because there were always guys from my age group playing basketball. I was in their grade, but not their class. I would shoot around for a little while and then they would pick sides. I just never got picked. I was little, so I felt that I got passed over in sports. It doesn't feel good.

When we face adversity like that, it can bring out the best in us. When I look back at that, I feel like it brought out the best in me. It made me persevere more, made me stronger, made me work harder, gave me a greater work ethic, gave me more focus, and gave me a willingness to try harder and prove the world wrong. That has served me some as I've grown older, in a sense that I believe that anything is possible. As you persevere, you can go through it. You can accomplish whatever it is that you're seeking to achieve, whether it's out there or in here. I got to the place where I was on a semi-pro team after college. I traveled around in Wisconsin and Chicago a bit. I got to play with guys who had starred in college, and I even scored 32 points one night. So things like that can happen.

Others of you can probably think of moments in your lives where you've felt passed over. It might have been that you wanted to be cheerleader, and you weren't in the in group or didn't have the body that was just right. There are many ways in which we feel that we've been passed over or we weren't included or we were too shy. Everybody has their story where they didn't feel adequate. They may retreat or became more introverted. You may have felt passed over for a job, raise, or promotion. There are those who have even felt passed over as a child. For one reason or another, they were not the favorite in the family. Their parents treated the others differently, and they were the black sheep. I've done a lot of counseling, so this does happen and people have felt and experienced the pain of that. It doesn't feel good at all.

I was talking to an 80-year-old man this week about his life and how he felt passed over in his childhood and growing up. It's amazing what this man has overcome and gone on to do. He said his brother was the angel in the family; his mother thought he could do no wrong. His brother was five years older than him, and they got along, but it was clear that the mother adored one son and the other was like a mistake. That's how he referred to himself. "I was a mistake. I somehow came along. I wasn't wanted." They lived on a farm, so she had him sleep outside under a tree on a cot. It was that obvious. There were all kinds of other things that bordered on abuse.

But he went on from there. He gathered himself and reached deeper and persisted in himself. He wanted to go on to college. His brother was a doctor, so when he went to school he wanted to study Agronomy, which was the study of crops. He went to Texas A&M. They rejected him. They gave him a test and said he wasn't smart enough and needed to go do something else. He couldn't even get into college.

They had a place where the guys who couldn't cut the mustard went. There were classes offered at an air base outside of College Station. He went there for a year and was the head of that group. He then went and made an appointment with the dean of A&M. He sat down in his office and

showed him his grades. He said, “I want in. What do I have to do? Who do I have to know?” The dean said, “Just get out of my office. You’re in.”

From then on, he was on the dean’s list every semester. He also decided not to study Agronomy, but to be a veterinarian. He graduated at the top of his class. He went on to have the largest veterinary clinic in Houston—and probably the state of Texas. He was very successful and looked up to by veterinarians everywhere. He was an amazing man, but he endured a childhood that was very difficult. He endured all of these roadblocks.

In talking to he and his wife on the phone, he started crying, having brought up all of the feelings that he had gone through. It’s a tough thing, but he dug deep. It was adversity that brought the best out in him, too. That is his story.

There’s a question: who have we passed over in our lives? Sometimes we don’t even realize the people we have passed over. We judge them by their appearances, write them off, or don’t give them a chance to show their true colors. There’s the statement that says, “I am you and you are me, and everywhere we go we only meet ourselves.” If we can remember that, it’s a powerful thing, no matter whom we encounter and where they are in their unfoldment.

Another good question is what should we pass over? There are things in life we should pass over, release, let go, and forgive. We want to give somebody a pass sometimes. There are times when it does not benefit us to hold onto resentments or hurts, so we should pass over some things for our own good.

Who and what do we pass over, in the sense that we sometimes neglect or forget? There are people who we may take for granted, who are there for us in a particular way. We may have forgotten to thank them. Or we may just need to tell them how much we love them and care about them and how much we value that they’re in our lives. So don’t pass over those who you may have taken for granted in the past. In fact, you should have a “pass over” list of those people who you need to let know how important they’ve been in your life.

That’s a good part of Palm Sunday, which is today. Anyone and everyone should have a “pass over” list. Jesus had the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and everyone was invited. No one was excluded. Jesus never left anyone out and never passed over anyone. You can see that throughout His ministry.

Along those lines, there’s a wonderful story which has been shared with me many times because it is so powerful and meaningful. It’s told by a Jewish Rabbi. It’s about a Jewish boy named Shaya. He attended a school in Brooklyn, New York that caters to children with disabilities. Shaya was quite slow. The school had various levels of disability. Some students mainstreamed back into conventional schools after a year or two, but Shaya was slower than the others.

Shaya’s father was delivering a speech at a fundraising dinner for the school. Early in his presentation, he asked the question, “Where is God’s perfection?” He answered, “I believe that

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when God brings a child like this into the world, the perfection that he seeks is in the way people react to this child.” How do they react? Do they write him off, push him aside, pass over, or react in another way? He acknowledged that his son was slow and didn’t understand a lot of things.

He went on to tell about a day when he and his son had come to the school—it was a Sunday. There were kids playing baseball outside. Shaya wanted to play. He was not athletic and didn’t have a clue what the game was about. But the father felt his son’s excitement and went and asked one of the kids if his son could play. The boy said, “Well, we’re losing by six runs, and the game has already been in progress. We’re in the 8th inning. I guess we can have him on our team and try to put him up to bat in the 9th inning.” The father was delighted.

They gave Shaya a glove. He went out in the field. Fortunately, no balls were hit his way; he wouldn’t know what to do with them. In the bottom of the 8th inning, they scored some runs. Now, instead of being six runs down, they were only two or three runs down. In the 9th inning, they got another run. It ended up that the bases were loaded, two were out, and it was Shaya’s turn to bat. The father wondered if these kids would really come through and allow Shaya to bat in this crucial time. And they did. They give him a bat, and he didn’t know what to do with it. The pitcher from the opposing side came in closer to lob the ball so that Shaya would get to make contact. He swung miserably at the first pitch, so one of his teammates came up and reached around, holding the bat with him. The pitcher came even closer and lobbed the ball. Together, Shaya and his teammate swung and hit the ball. It was a slow roller to the pitcher. The pitcher could have thrown him out at first base, but instead he threw it over the first baseman into right field. Everyone started yelling, “Run Shaya, run to first!”

When he got to first he didn’t know where to go. The right fielder threw the ball over the third baseman’s head. He got the idea of what was going on—that they were helping Shaya. They got him running to second, yelling, “Run to second!” When he got to second, he kept going into the outfield. The shortstop from the other team got him steered toward third. Then everyone yelled, “Go home, Shaya!” By this time, Shaya ran home. He stepped on home plate, and all 18 boys were running along behind him. All of the teammates had unloaded from the bench. All of the players had come in from the field. They all rounded third base and came home together. That was perfection in this man’s story. That day, 18 boys went home together and touched a perfection that had to do with opening a heart to boy named Shaya.

It showed that there are those who are less talented who should be recognized as much as those who are talented. We’re all human beings. We all have feelings. We all have emotions. They are people too. Everybody wants to feel important. All of these players coming together is a great example of inclusivity and the five senses not passing over.

So perfection is beyond form. It is beyond the outer senses. It is to rise up and out of that land of Pharaoh—the pharaoh of judgment, fear, and separation—and go to a grand land of love and acceptance and oneness where no one gets passed over.

God bless you.