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“The Passover of Freedom,” 1917 April 8.

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April 8, 1917.

## THE PASSOVER OF FREEDOM.

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The Jews of Russia have celebrated their first true Passover of Freedom, the first Passover free from tyranny, free from the Russian days of oppression, free from the fearful night watching, and all Israel, for almost the first time in two thousand years, has celebrated a true Passover of Freedom; a Passover of Freedom where the millions of Israel have felt themselves free from the yoke and the ~~heavy~~ shackles and the chains. How wonderful this Passover is! how marvelous this day of freedom! You will fully comprehend this if, for the moment, you make a contrast of this present Passover with the former Passovers in medieval times, or with the Passovers in modern times in a land like Russia, <sup>if you</sup> ~~if we~~ make a contrast with the time of the blood accusation, when Mendel Bilas stood accused by the Governor of Russia with having foully slain a Christian child in order to secure blood for the Jewish Passover, <sup>may make a</sup> ~~if~~ we <sup>may</sup> contrast with that condition of only a few years ago, when the whole people of Israel and our old, historic, honored Judaism stood slandered with the charge of ritual murder. Now for the first time Israel celebrates a Passover free from this terror, free from these medieval and ancient horrors, free from all the anxious days of trial and the fearful nights of watching.

Need I remind you of Kischeneff, need I remind you of that story again and those bitter experiences of modern days? Need I speak with the words of a Russian, as Zangwill has put it for his people,--the \_\_\_\_\_, as he describes it? Are we the first people to crush down the Jew?" No! from the dawn of history you have stamped upon him, the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Persians, the Babylonians, the Greeks and the Romans. And the Jew, the young David answers, "Yes, it is true, even Christianity did not fail to manifest its hatred, but only when Holy Church arose x x and not until Holy Russia arose were x x

But it is too much, delivered from Egypt \_\_\_\_\_ thousand years ago, to be slaves, Russian slaves, today. The Russian Kischeneff and names like unto it -- may the pogroms inspired against the Jews, and exacted with the aid and under the authority and with the protection of the Russian Government, from this day forth be only memories of horror for the Jews of Russia and for Israel at large. Since the days of Augustus, since the days of \_\_\_\_\_ more than three thousand years ago, since the days of the mighty Pharaoh ruler of an ancient world, Israel has ever been awaiting a new ~~Exodus~~ Exodus, ever hoping for a new destruction of a new Pharaoh. Oh, wonderful people, never to surrender at some time! Oh, wonderful



people, wonderfully sustained in thy faith that God will make Israel free! And as six hundred thousand men marched out of Egypt, so have we ever hoped to do at some time; so have we ever hoped for the day that the six millions in Russia will at last be set free.

And again

a day of history comes, the proof and the witness that thrones will totter and dynasties decay and tyrannies go straight on to their own destruction. The Czar Nicholas passes from the thrown unwept, un-honored and unsung; scarce a friend among all the nations of the world; scarce a defender among all the leaders of mankind; scarce one so poor as to do him honor and reverence. Wonderful, is it not, that a whole people of 170 millions, one of the mightiest peoples of the whole earth, has been set free? Wonderful, is it not, that from a vast empire nine millions of square miles in extent the yoke has been lifted, and no longer are the slaves in the shackles, or the chains bound and fettered upon the limbs of the servants and serfs? Wonderful, is it not, that one-sixth of the total ~~habitable~~ area of the whole globe now has become the advocate to the cause of human freedom, to say nothing of those that are left here in America? It is a new epoch in the history of human-kind.

The month of March of the year 1917 is the beginning of a new epoch in the whole history of the nations of the earth. It marks the

beginning of a new era of human freedom, a new democracy of the people, a steady forward advance on behalf of modern civilization. Have you ever thought of the advance of human freedom. Within a little more than a half century we have had great emancipations. We have had an emancipation in Brazil a little more than a half century ago. We have had the emancipation of the serfs in Russia and we have had the emancipation of the black slaves in these United States. Have you ever thought of the revolutionary forces at work within the last decade of our human history? Within the last decade of our human history there have been mighty revolutions in nations and empires, in Turkey, in Portugal, in China, in Persia, and now in Russia. These revolutions come about by forces from within and not by forces from without. Do not believe, as some would declare, that the revolution in Russia is now a justification of the great world war with all its world of suffering and all its world of slaughter. It is not truly accurate thus to declare that the revolution in Russia, in weight, significance and revolutionary advance for human freedom, is the result of fighting for human freedom on behalf of the great nations of the world.

I am compelled to remind you that we must <sup>speaking</sup> ~~special~~ welcome to the new enthusiast for democracy in Russia. We have been fighting



for democracy in Russia for generations past. We have been speaking in protest of Russian cruelty these many years. But our message has not been heard or heeded. We cannot forget there have been always those among the great nations willing to make allegiance with tyranny, willing to be apologists and willing to be defenders of deviltries at the same time. Have we forgotten that there were those who were always silent concerning Russia's crimes and cruelties? Need you be reminded that our great American Press, which has been so strongly liberty loving and so strongly daring and opposing, has been so often silent concerning Russian crimes and cruelties. Ah! how well we know how apologists have spoken for the beaurocratic regime and the Czar Nicholas. <sup>Need</sup> ~~What~~ I remind you that the powerful London Times and its special correspondents, often during war times have spoken of Jewish disloyalty and Jewish treason in Russia, and thereby have explained Russia's crimes against our own people? Need I remind you of the courage of a man like Zangwill, honor be to his name, who dared to speak for the English public, who dared to speak to the whole neutral world, <sup>that</sup> ~~who~~ dared to make this alliance between nations democratic and nations not democratic, but despotic? Need I to remind you that a man like George Bernard Shaw had been at his place side by side with Zangwill

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These are George Bernard Shaw's words, written very recently, when he says our alliance with the Czar was felt to be a disgrace, and he speaks on behalf of the liberal minds and people in Great Britain and England. If you would know the true significance x  
the words spoken by the never to be forgotten Count Lyoff Tolstoi, who wrote years ago: "The French people will lose prestige by becoming

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But, thank God, that the Romanoffs, who ruled and mangled Russia these 300 years with the bloody fist and spur -- it seems almost impossible to be true now -- the scepter has been wrested from their hands, and their power has been broken forever, I hope,--forever, I believe. Thank God it was almost a bloodless revolution. We have heard no stories concerning the anarchists and nihilists with horrible tales of assassination. Thank God that the provisional government has come into power, lead and guided, so we are told, by those who know Russia best,- by the most gifted and most competent and most elevated leaders in Russia. Russia today for the first time in 300 years is being ruled by its true rulers. Russia today for the first time is being ruled by those who are noble in intellect, noble in their hearts, and noble also in their spirit and purpose. Hear the ukase first proclaimed by the provisional government! It sounds like



a message of freedom to mankind yielding to the imperial demands of  
the national genius. In the name of justice and in commemoration of  
the advent and triumph of the new regime, founded upon liberty,  
equality, with order of general political amnesty. And in response  
to that wonderful proclamation, out of the Siberian prisons and out  
of Siberian exile thousands upon thousands are pouring forth, getting  
their liberty back, to the beloved Russia for which they dared to  
fight and suffer, the political prisoners and exiles, the thousands  
sent to Siberia without trial or with only the mockery of trials in  
years past. I question whether in the history of any civilized nation  
we could read a story like this which we heard but recently concern-  
ing Russia and Siberia. I know not whether it is true or not,--that  
when the message came to those Siberian cities of horrors, that many  
with the ~~xxx~~ shackles still upon their limbs, finding no blacksmiths  
to strike the chains from their limbs, celebrated a banquet in commem-  
oration of ~~xxx~~ the establishment of the republic with the chains still  
dangling upon their limbs and celebrated it in the Governor's palace.  
And from that Siberia there comes back to the Capitol the grand  
mother of the revolution Babska, now 74 years old, who has  
spent 44 years in prison and in exile. Her words, I believe, are  
"Russia built prisons instead of schools,"--who when she returned to



Russia, the land of liberty, pleaded not for blood and for vengeance against the tyrants that had oppressed her and her people, but in the truest spirit she pleaded for books and education for the masses.

x x

The Russian manifesto of freedom<sup>^</sup> and constituent Assembly will pledge fundamental laws guaranteeing the rights, equality and liberty of the people. It reads almost like our own Declaration of Independence with its inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, guaranteeing the immutable rights of equality and liberty. The old persecutions are ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ to cease, not alone the persecutions of the Jews, but also the persecutions of

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and the vast millions of Mahomedans scattered through the Russian Empire, to cease from now on forever --

the adaptation of the rights guaranteed to Finland; the injustice of the subjections of the Poles, and the \_\_\_\_\_ and the Croatsians and the millions who have known subjection under Russian rule. The time has come for freedom. The time has come for education. The time has come for opportunity to the peasant millions who were emancipated from serfdom more than half a century ago, for all those who have never known education or opportunity or liberty.

How well the words spoken by Paul Milkoff, now Military Governor of Russia, giving assurance of the removal of the disabilities cover-

ing the Jews. How horrible that story of Russia's treatment of the Jews, with its piling up of system upon system, the confining of the life of the Jews within their own native land. Russia has treated her native Jews, who called Russia their fatherland, as though they were aliens and outcasts within the land of their birth. Not only have they been outlawed by the law, but by the government, and the government not only outlawed them, but have created suspicion and fostered distrust and inspired hatred that led to the destruction of Israel within Russia.

We owe our debt of gratitude to the brave spirits who dared to stand up for and in defense of our Jewish brethren. Just their defencelessness invited attack and cruelty. We owe our debt of gratitude to all of them,--to the great liberal leaders and the radicals in Russia like unto Maxim Gorky, who dared to write "On our conscience the shameful stain of Jewish wrong". In that stain there is a dreadful array of false charges and numberless pogroms. But was it not Gorky who here, in America, being questioned in our metropolis of New York, gave answer that he was most impressed, not by the might of the bridges, not by the marvelous, not by the gigantic skyscrapers that lifted themselves to the very heights of the sky, but that he was most impressed by the people, the fact that the people stand erect,-



they do not cringe. Thank God! it may be said that now, after 300 years, the people in Russia stand erect; they do not cringe.

Russia is well rid of the Czar Nicholas; free from the beaurocratic regime which so long governed Russia. Russia has a new record to make in the history of the world. Oh, how it should ring through the world! Long live free Russia!

And to you in America, I say especially, it is impossible for us to estimate truly the influence upon Jewish life and history. This revolution in Russia, with its new birth of freedom for the Jews and for all of Russia, will revolutionize the problems of the Jew in every free land. Nay, more, I believe that it will compel freedom for the Jews in the lands where they are not wholly free,-- in lands like Roumania and Gr and Persia, and all the rest. This revolution in Russia marks the beginning of the real solution of the problem within which persecution will cease during the close of the 19th and the dawn of the 20th Century; the solution of the problem within which persecution will not be in Palestine--will not be in America; the solution of the problem that this persecution will be but a whisper in Russia itself. The future of the Jew in Russia, that Russia for which the Jews sent four hundred thousand men, who were allowed the right to fight and the right to die on behalf of their



flag and country, that Russia at last will give to those Jews equal freedom and rights, that they may be Russian subjects like their fellowmen. I know not whether you feel the significance of it as I do, but since the fall of Jeruselem in the year (1870) of the common era, more than 1900 years; since the destruction of our national life under the power of the all-conquering Romans, I believe there has been no event in our Jewish history that has so definitely exercised a revolutionary influence upon Jewish life and history. President Wilson but recently, in making the beautiful and noble acknowledgement of the magnificent gift tendered to the suffering Jews, led by Julius Rosenwald, a prince in America, when Julius Rosenwald offered to raise ten millions to the cause of the suffering Jews, he stated that he would give one million if the Jews of this land would give their nine millions. President Wilson said: "

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No need for me to paint for you your suffering and world horror and world catastrophe; but I do emphasize for every young man and woman present, that the obligation for the suffering Jews is our obligation. It is upon the Jews of America, and no sacrifice which we could make could possibly be too great, and no money which we could give would ever be too much."

The Jews of Russia must rebuild their life, they must rebuild their homes and villages and institutions, and they must rebuild the whole organization, the whole life of the Jewish people, in order that, when the days go, they must prove themselves to be really obligated to Russia and the Russian people for having set them free. The Jews must justify themselves under freedom. Freedom must prove to them not only a blessing, not only a blessing for the Jews, but also of Russia as well. It is the great opportunity of history. The yoke has been broken. I trust the yoke has been broken forever. It is the great opportunity of all history, affecting far more powerfully than you dream of the life of every Jew everywhere throughout the world. The yoke has been broken; the shackles and chains that have fettered the life of the Jews these thousands of years are cast off; and today, the Jews are free,--freer throughout the world than they have ever been free these 1900 years past. I believe, looking forward to the years of the future, the time is coming, when through this casting off of the chains and shackles of Russian despotism we will have destroyed every one of the roots entitled Czarism, not alone in Russia, but throughout the world. It is the emancipation of six millions of men, women and children like unto ourselves, in one of the greatest nations, and it is one of the greatest achievements in



the life story of history.

I thank God that I have lived within the years of my own ministry to behold this dream and hope of all the years past. It always seemed like a duty to me these years past, that we here in America, who are free, should fight the fight on to the end, that our brother should be free as we are free. A thousand burdens and difficulties may yet oppress their lives, but, thank God, they are free, and the yoke is broken, the chains and shackles sundered forever. We rejoice that freedom has come to Russia, the greatest empire, save China, on the history of the earth. We thank God that freedom has come to the Russian people, ~~170,000,000~~ one hundred and seventy millions strong-- one hundred and seventy millions! save China, the most numerous nation on the face of the world. We thank God that freedom has come to those millions and to this vast empire, and that now this land and this people is dedicated and consecrated to the cause of light and liberty. We pray for the time when light will come, not alone to those millions, but to all the nations of the world. We pray for the time when the yoke and the burden of war will be lifted from the body and spirit of the nations. We pray that peace will come to the nations of the world. Oh, what a mockery, in a time like the present, to celebrate the Easter! What a mockery to celebrate a Passover with



their message of a Messiah yet to come! The Messiah has not yet  
come to the world -- cannot come to the world. Messianic times will  
never come on earth--will never come until recognized by men and  
recognized by the nations,- until that day when righteousness is  
enthroned, when justice will be established and peace will bless the  
lives of the millions upon earth. In that day there will be a true  
Passover of Freedom.

