



## The Promise of Passover: “Next Year in Jerusalem”

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Perhaps it was near the season of Passover when Daniel contemplated Jeremiah’s prophecy of the 70 prophetic weeks (Dan 9). The 70 years of exile were drawing to a close and as his thoughts turned toward home perhaps the words “next year in Jerusalem,” which would eventually become the closing words of the Haggadah, ran through his mind. How far he was from home. And how far he and his people had to come before they could return home. But there was yet reason to hope: Hashem had once delivered Israel from the Egyptians, and, according to the prophet Jeremiah, He promised to rescue them again.

The Passover was first celebrated the night that Israel was freed from Egyptian slavery. Gathered in their homes, bags packed and

shoes laced, families stood eagerly about their tables. At the center of their contemplation was the Pascal lamb. Its blood stained the doorposts of their homes, its body was roasted whole and

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unbroken. Unleavened bread, which could quickly be prepared, was also on the table. Everything about that first Passover spoke of haste. Excitement hung in the air as the gathered people eagerly whispered the words: “Next year in the Promised Land.” “Next year we will be home.”

But the centuries since that first celebration had come and gone: the people had, at last, reached their destination, had lived and grown, and had, tragically, fallen away from their relationship with Hashem, and, finally, been sent into exile. Now they were once more poised on the brink of returning to their homeland. Daniel, as he contemplated Jeremiah’s prophecy, was filled with deep sorrow for he realized that the longest journey that the people were soon to make was not physical but spiritual.

Physically, it was possible to cleanse the people and their homes of symbols of sin: the dust could be wiped away, the leaven removed from the home. But what caused Daniel to sink to the floor in anguish and sorrow was

the lack of spiritual cleanness of himself and his people. And so he prayed for forgiveness:

“O Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with all who love him and obey his commands, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the men of Judah and people of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our

unfaithfulness to you” (Dan 9: 4-7).

No sooner had Daniel completed his prayer, than the angel Gabriel stood beside him: “Daniel, I have come to give you insight and understanding. As soon as you began to pray, an answer was given, which I have come to tell you, for you are highly esteemed” (vv. 22-23). The angel went on to tell Daniel that times of trouble would come, but the Anointed One would not forget His people. Just as He had passed over them at the first Passover celebration, so He would pass over them again. Just as He had led them to their homeland, so He would lead them home again. Just as He had redeemed and restored them in the past, so He would redeem

and restore them again.

“Next year in Jerusalem.”

The promise of Passover is still as much alive today as it was in Daniel’s time. Its twofold requirement for the people of Hashem is also applicable. The need remains to remove not only the symbol of sin, but the sin itself. As we prepare for the Passover season, we must remember to cleanse not only the home, but the heart as well.

## Editorial

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the faithfulness of the God who fulfills His promises and prophecies in due time. On the other hand, it is sad to observe that this book has played a dramatic role in the Jewish-Christian separation. For many Christians, the book of Daniel has been used not only to support and strengthen Christian faith, but it has also been brandished like a weapon of death “against” the Jews. Indeed, on the basis of a distorted reading of the beautiful text of the 70 weeks prophecy, for example, a number of Christians have forged a whole theory of replacement of

the Jews and, by implication, of rejection of the Jews. Ironically, the “good news” for Christians became the “bad news” for Jews. No wonder, then, that Jews have distanced themselves from this book and have become suspicious or simply indifferent toward Daniel’s book!

Jews and Christians should, therefore, learn to read—to re-read—the book of Daniel with a fresh eye. They should learn to do it together, listening to each other: the Jew stressing the value of justice and of Torah; the Christian singing about the grace of God and the coming of the

Messiah. Each without hatred, without suspicion. Who knows? In the breath of this effort, they may not only come to appreciate a different face of a traditional enemy, but they may even discover a new face of their God, the most important one perhaps.