

Text Teaching Prepared by Rabbi Esther Lederman
Jews United for Justice
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1. As soon as the Israelites emerged from the sea, the angels rushed in to be the first to utter Song before God, but God said: ‘Let my children be the first to do so.’ ...God said to His angels: ‘I am not in any way abasing you by saying that they should precede you, but being mortals, they had better be the first, before any of them die; but you being immortal, can utter Song whenever you wish.’

Midrash: Exodus Rabbah 23:8

2. In the beginning, when God began to create heaven and earth
The earth being unformed and void, darkness over the surface of the deep
And a wind from God sweeping over the water,
God said: “Let there be light!” And there was light.

Genesis 1:1-2

3. The miracle of the first day was expressed in the community’s willingness to light a small cruse of oil without reasonable assurance that their efforts would be sufficient to complete the rededication of the Temple. ...The Hanukkah lights encourage one to trust human beginnings and to focus one’s passions and efforts on whatever opportunities are available at the present moment.

Rabbi David Hartman

4. The Torah relates that the Holy One concluded two Covenants with Israel. One Covenant was made in Egypt....The second Covenant was at Mt. Sinai....One can say that the Covenant of Egypt was a Covenant of Fate, and the Covenant of Sinai was one of destiny. In order to explain the difference between a People of Fate and a Nation of Destiny, it is appropriate to deal with a different contrast – that between an Encampment and a Congregation.

Encampment and Congregation constitute two different sociological experiences, two separate groups that have nothing in common and do not support one another. An Encampment is created out of a desire for self-defense and thrives on fear. A Congregation is fashioned out of longing for the realization of an exalted moral idea and thrives on love. In the Encampment, fate’s rule is unlimited, whereas destiny rules the Congregation.

A Congregation is a collection of individuals with a single past, a common future, shared aspirations, identical yearnings for a world that is totally good and pleasant, and a singular and harmonious destiny.

Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik

*Kol Ha'olam Kulo Gesher Tzar M'od
V'haikar, V'haikar Lo I'fached Lo I'fached Klal.
All the world is a narrow bridge
and the main thing is to never be afraid.*

*Kol Ha'olam Kulo, Gesher Tzar M'od.
V'ahikar Sheh Lo Yitphached Klal.
All the world is a narrow bridge
and the main thing is not to be paralyzed by fear.
*Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav**

This is the recipe of life
said my mother
as she held me in her arms as I wept
think of those flowers you plant
in the garden each year
they will teach you
that people too
must wilt
fall
root
rise
in order to bloom
-rupi kaur