

JEWS AGAINST JEWS

The portion of Shelah is a painful one to read. It is the story of Jews against Jews, of internal dissension and discouragement. The meraglim, the princely scouts sent by Moses to spy out Canaan prior to the Israelite invasion, came back with two reports, a majority and a minority report. Not only were they split, but the whole of Jewish leadership and all the people were divided. The result was an unmitigated disaster.

That this civil divisiveness included derogatory statements about Eretz Israel only made matters worse. A great Jewish scholar, Rabbi Meir Simhah Cohen of Dvinsk, one of the most illustrious sages of a generation or two ago, made the observation that of the two major catastrophic episodes of the early history of Israel, the spies and the making of the Golden Calf, the former was far more serious. God was incensed by the idolatry of the Golden Calf, but He ultimately forgave the people. However, He refused to forgive the entire generation that was guilty in the incident of the meraglim. The Golden Calf was a sin against God, and this He was able to forgive. But the divisiveness in the wake of the spies' report was a sin against Israel, especially against the Land of Israel, and when God finds Jews fouling their own nest He considers it unforgivable.

Jewish anti-Jewishness and Jewish enmity to their own land have always been a thorn in the flesh of our people. All too often have Jews been the victim of Jewish betrayal. It is not generally known that the Chief of Staff of the Roman General Titus who conquered Jerusalem, ^{and} set the torch to the Second Temple, ushering in the great destruction which we have been mourning for almost 2,000 years -- was a meshumad, a renegade Jew, who was no less than the nephew of the great Alexandrian Jewish philosopher, Philo. During the Second Commonwealth, informers to Rome and treacherous Jewish sectarians were so common, that our Sages found it necessary to institute a special, 19th blessing to be added to the Amidah, denouncing these informers, sectarians, and traitors.

In our own days, Jewish collaborationists in the Nazi concentration camps cost more than one Jewish life. From the beginning of the Communist reign in Russia, the Yevsektzies were dedicated Jewish Communists, committed to the uprooting of all Jewishness and the institution of Communism. Even today perceptive tourists can tell which so-called Synagogue officers in Russia are nothing more than Government stooges who have made it their task in life to keep Russian Jews away from the Synagogue and away from Jewish tourists, and to embitter the remaining years of the few elderly Rabbis that still remain.

For centuries, Jews have applied this painful insight to their interpretation of the verse in Isaiah (Chap. 49):
·lk3' גַּמְלָה וְהַמְחִיבֵיךָ אֶת־הַמְחִיבֵיךָ, which originally meant: your despoilers and destroyers (i.e., the Babylonians) will depart from you. But the folk interpretation is: your destroyers and despoilers will emerge from your own midst; they will be renegade Jews.

Unfortunately, in our own country and time as well we have experience with such anti-Jewish Jews in various forms and of different levels of culpability.

The man who in February 1969 organized a demonstration in front of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations supporting El Fatah -- was a Jew.

The young woman who on television not too long ago declared that Israel must vanish from the Middle East in the same way that the French disappeared from Algeria -- was Jewish.

The French professor, a famous Orientalist, who constantly sides with the Arabs against the Israelis -- is a Jew.

The Frenchwoman who recently wrote a book comparing the Israelis to the Nazis and out-exaggerating the most extravagant fabrications of the now universally discredited Ahmed Shukairy -- is a Jewess.

The New Left, so many of whose leaders condemn Israel as imperialist and militarist, is largely Jewish.

The misguided Liberal who writes in the Village Voice defending the Black anti-Semite who complained about Hitler that he "did not make enough lampshades out of Jewish skin" -- is a Jew (Nat Hentoff).

It helps very little that his residual, vestigial Jewish conscience pricks him and inspires him to magnanimously offer to engage this Black anti-Semite in a "dialogue" in order to enlighten him. It is curious how these super-liberals who for a couple of generations at least have been ridiculing observant Jews for holding on to their ancient tradition, are themselves the most unthinking, unreasonable, and slavish adherents to their own spurious liberal tradition. They have been taught, and have talked it into themselves, that the good-old liberal dogma is true: all people need in order to behave properly is to be enlightened about the truth. Our Jewish liberal, therefore, offers to "dialogue" with the Black anti-Semite, and unquestionably by sheer force of intellect, sophistication, and monopoly on the truth of liberalism, he will enlighten and convert the Black anti-Semite and the world will be set aright. What colossal arrogance there lies in this offer, and in the whole world-view which informs it: as if the Holocaust could have been avoided if only some dedicated liberals would have entered into "dialogue" with Adolf Hitler!

More recently, we read this week of the disgraceful pro-Arab anti-Israel demonstration in Frankfurt at an occasion when

Israeli Ambassador Ben-Natan was addressing an audience. The people who broke up the meeting were Arabs, Germans -- and Jews, Jewish leftists! מנהיגים ומנהיגות אנטי-שמאל.

Now, not all of the individuals whom I have mentioned are of the same type. Some are traitors, Benedict Arnolds, Jewish anti-Semites possessed of psychotic self-hatred, such as those who support El Fatah, those who would want to see an Arab Viet Cong destroy Jewish civilian life in Israel.

Some are what have been called "Jewish Uncle Toms" -- those who want to "pass" into the emerging society of vigorous Blacks, who seek to ingratiate themselves with the newest movements, those who are much over thirty but would like to pass for under thirty, and the fading liberals who would like to drink at the political fountain of youth by trying to outdo the most militant of the youthful militants -- such as our liberal critic who voices his inanities on the pages of the Village Voice.

And finally there are the meraglim type, those who work in the spirit of the spies mentioned in today's Sidra: they are motivated by fear, they are the apprehensive galut-type Jew, who for one reason or another bear enmity to the Land of Israel, or people who are opposed to Israel out of genuine but misguided zeal, such as those of the New Left.

Our Jewish response to these people must not be monolithic. For all of them we must bear great and brooding and pro-

found sadness. But otherwise we must treat each class separately.

For the traitors we have nothing but ill-will. We must unhesitatingly expel them from our midst as one does poison or cancer -- without love, without sympathy, without any opportunity for teshuvah or return.

To the meraglim type, the anti-Israel partisans, who have embarked on their path because of misdirected idealism, or because of fear, we must offer determined opposition, not unmixed with a grain of amusement. But the door must be slightly ajar, open especially for those young enough to be excused for youthful excess and foolishness.

And for the Uncle Toms of the Jewish community we must reserve a liberal -- very liberal -- dose of derision and contempt, and a great deal of pity.

It is inevitable that galut should produce such anomalies, such mutations, such moral monstrosities. We hope for the Messiah not only for political redemption and spiritual renaissance, but also for the rebirth of mutual fellowship in Israel, in which all Jews will have attained some minimal degree of Jewish maturity and therefore Jewish self-respect.

Today we welcomed a new month and read the special prayers for this occasion. Amongst them we recited the ¹²

^{פיו} ^{נעל}, in which we expressed our hope for the future, and, in order, we spoke of geulah (redemption); the ingathering of the

exiles; and, finally, *סיוע' ד פירנדן*, the time when all Israel will be bound together in friendship. Full redemption and the complete ingathering of the exiles from all over the world to Israel are very difficult tasks. But the hardest job, the most serious challenge, and the ultimate test of Messiah's authenticity will be -- whether he can restore friendship and good will amongst Jews!

A completely different sort of Jew-against-Jew phenomenon, not at all anti-Semitic but much more painful, was this week's demonstration in front of the Israeli Consulate here in Manhattan.

From five to ten thousand Orthodox Jews, many of them noticeable by their Hasidic garb, gathered in front of the Consulate to demonstrate against the State of Israel, protesting its autopsy policy. The demonstration was peaceful and orderly, but some signs and slogans and handbills went beyond the autopsy question to general insult against the State, and caused in the eyes of many of those who witnessed it a sense of humiliation, putting a shudder down their spines.

When something like this occurs -- Jews-against-Jews in public -- it is nothing less than a Hillul Hashem, a desecration of the Name of God, which embarrasses all Jews and makes all of us ashamed. Our tradition taught that *ל'ע פירנדן*

פירנדן פירנדן פירנדן פירנדן פירנדן, when the desecration of God's Name

is involved, we have no obligation of special deference to sages or scholars and certainly not to ordinary Jews. We may therefore not remain silent about this incident. These demonstrators are our brothers, we and they are identified as observant Jews, and that is why we suffer all the more chagrin and irritation and anger -- and justifiably so.

However, we must be careful not to overdo our anger, not to overstate our indignation, not to overreact. Just because they are close to us and we to them, we tend to be more critical of them than we are of others, and than others are of them. The danger of extremism is that it evokes an extreme reaction from people who are essentially moderate, it brings out the ugliest elements within us, and the result is an escalation of ugly extremism. We must be very careful not to fall victim to the same irrationality which motivated this demonstration.

Let us, therefore, bear in mind the following facts in evaluating what has occurred and in forming a judgment.

First, these people are not representative of Orthodox Jewry as a whole. They are not even representative of Hasidic Jewry. Let no one dare make an unfavorable comment about Hasidim in general because of these people. Anyone who extrapolates from these hotheads to all Hasidim, and condemns all Hasidic Jews as anti-Israel, is making a colossal and grievous error. The elementary fact is that while you and I speak about our love for Israel,

while we preach Zionism, it is they, the Hasidic Jews, who are actually emigrating to Israel, who have the highest percentage of Aliyah of any other group in the Diaspora! I will go a step further: I do not believe that these people are even representative at all times of the Satmarer Rebbe himself! During the past year he has been known to expel from his Yeshiva many of the youthful militants who carried on in ways that are outrageous.

Furthermore, it is good to remember that in this age of youthful militancy throughout the world and especially on the campus, these young religious hotheads are very much in fashion. They are "with it!"

This particular group, the one most responsible for this week's demonstration is, according to the best information available to me, a dissident group within the Satmarer complex, one that is especially militant -- if you will, they are a Satmarer S.D.S.

Consider the situation of this Satmarer S.D.S. In full honesty, and without allowing our total commitment to the State of Israel to blind us to facts and to stifle honest criticism (without which a friend is only a lackey), let us admit that there is reason for their rebelliousness; it is not just a Hasidic version of youthful spring fever. The Israeli Government has been derelict in its autopsy policy. Its present laws are woefully inadequate, and represent a violation of civil rights, an offense to religious

sensitivities, to the extent that many critical patients in Israel refuse hospital care because they fear what will happen to their bodies in the event of death. Moreover, not only are the laws presently insufficient to protect the rights of citizens, but even these laws are not being obeyed. Within the last several weeks the State Controller issued a report containing his findings that 25% of the physicians were violating even these laws! Imagine what would happen in New York if 25% of the drivers in the street were unlicensed, or 25% of the pharmacists who make out our prescriptions were unlicensed, or 25% of the physicians who practice medicine were not properly certified. So that, like the S.D.S. on the campus, there are real grievances which occasion these outbursts.

And again, as with the S.D.S., we should not, in our revulsion against their militancy and truculence and incivility, ignore the cause of their action and fail to improve a deteriorating situation. We must without further ado begin to remedy the untenable circumstances and bring whatever pressure we can on the Israeli Government and its political parties to be done once and for all with this ugly situation.

But most important, and once again as with the S.D.S., despite our acknowledgement of the existence of a cause for rebelliousness, and even its justice, we must firmly and resolutely reject and condemn in no uncertain terms this despicable display which moved very far from the specific question of autopsies to a general

anti-Zionism and antagonism toward the State of Israel. This was unquestionably a Hillul Hashem. And סיוע'א פא דער"א ל'ס, such things are simply not done by Jews and especially not by religious Jews. It is inexcusable and indefensible. And, as we learned from our Sidra concerning the meraglim, it is also unforgivable.

Let us grant that the demonstrators were motivated by the highest ideals, that what they did was clearly פ'נה פ'ס for the sake of Heaven. But high ideals and פ'נה פ'ס are no excuse for slandering and publicly defaming the Jewish State.

At the very beginning of our portion, Rashi asks why the narrative concerning the spies was placed in this particular spot, right after the end of last week's Sidra, which tells about Aaron and Miriam speaking ill of Moses and the wife that he took to himself. Rashi replies that the incident concerning Miriam should have taught the princes that God is displeased with lashon ha'ra and hotzaat dibbah, with slander and gossip and defamation -- and they failed to learn from her. However, a contemporary Israeli darshan, R. Chayim Zuckerman (פ"ד זצ"ק) asks: Is this all that should have deterred the meraglim from their nefarious act? Were they not personal witnesses to all the miracles that God had wrought for Israel in the desert? Did they not share in the Exodus and hear the promise of inheriting the Promised Land? He answers that the Miriam episode contains one element that is particularly

relevant to the meraglim. She was not indulging in a piece of womanly gossip about a sister-in-law. She was motivated by le'shem shamayim, by the noblest and most selfless ideals: this pagan daughter of an idolatrous priest was no fit companion for the Prophet of the Lord. She compromised Moses' leadership, his religious authority, and the honor and dignity of Torah itself. Miriam was not far from wrong -- the people were restless and hypercritical of Moses and drew the wrong conclusions from his personal marital status. And nevertheless the divine judgment was clear and uncompromising: Miriam was dreadfully wrong. No excuse for defamation even if it is "sincere," for lashon ha'ra even if le'shem shamayim -- and Miriam must be humiliated and turn into a leper.

The spies should have learned from her that there is no excuse, no matter how high-minded, for publicly speaking ill of the Land of Israel.

This is our response to the demonstrators: no matter how aggrieved you feel, no matter how sincere your motives and how holy your intentions, the act of Hillul Hashem, of public divisiveness, of defamation of Israel before gentile eyes, is an act of moral leprosy. We condemn it without reservations.

We have lived through an age of nissim, of incredible miracles. The vicissitudes of our times are unprecedented - from utter devastation of a Holocaust to sudden renaissance in Israel, from tragedy to blessing, from gloom to euphoria. These gy-

rations, these profound Psychological and sociological displace

ments have wrenched us from our moorings and robbed us of our stability. The miracles have saved us, but left us with a residue of abnormality. Such is the heritage of miracles.

The legislation on autopsies is ⁻an abnormality. In no other free country does such wanton disregard for a person's body and family's sensitivity prevail.

The reaction against it that took place this week - was an abnormality, a grotesque and weird phenomenon. It was divisive and destructive.

But this is the price we must pay for the miracles which have kept us alive.

Now our prayer must be: ^{יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׁמַע וְיַשְׁלֵם} - May He who performed miracles for our ancestors (and, as the Israelis add, ^{אֲנֵינוּ}, for us as well), complete the miracles He began in our life-time: May we witness the complete redemption and the ingathering of all the exiles of our people.

But above all else, may God perform for us the greatest miracle of all -- that of neutralizing the ill effects of the previous miracles, May He bring about that miracle which will wipe away the disadvantages and the defects that come in the wake of the earlier miracles and that have marred contemporary Jewish life: May He restore us to ^{שְׁלֵמוֹת וְיָמִים שְׂמֵחִים}, to national health and friendship and reconciliation. ^{וְיִשְׁלֵם}