

This week there appeared in our local press a letter to the editor of the Springfield Union signed by one of the respected citizens of this city, and a former president of this congregation. This letter raises an issue which I believe has significance over and above the matter discussed, and is certainly worthy of mention in a sermon. The writer objects to the policy of the paper of carrying advertisements by certain real estate agents offering houses in "highly restricted sections", which, as any child knows, means "Jews not wanted". The writer further points out that the better newspapers in this country have dropped such ads because they do not want to be accessories to such bigotry, and pleads with the editor to pursue a similar policy. The editor's reply is childish as it is evasive and as naive as it is downright silly. We cannot dignify such sophomoric arguments with a rebuttal from the pulpit. The writer, however, does deserve congratulations for performing a public service, and the topic requires elaboration and analysis from a democratic and religious point of view.

The McCarran mentality which motivates this kind of "restricted" clause is nothing new to us Jews. Spain put up such a sign in 1492, Russia is an expert in it with centuries of practice, and England tried it in Palestine until they gave up. Our own great country has succumbed to such disgrace today when, through political connivance and malicious cynicism it has passed a McCarran Act. I need not bother to convince you of the fact that this a violation of every great principle of Americanism. Our lawmakers, with this "gezerah", have clipped the wings of the American Eagle, darkened the bright stars on Old Glory and effectively extinguished the torch of the Statue of Liberty.

So that when we find an ad in the press of our own town carrying this mccaranish clause, we regard it as more than the undemocratic snobbishness of an isolated bigot. It brings to our memory the full blast of the horrors of old, and frightens us as being a deadly serious omen for the future. Something must be done.

One approach is public protest - writing letters to the Editor or to congressmen, speaking out from the pulpit or from a lectern or any platform dedicated to the civil liberties of ~~an~~ ^{the} individual. Another is proper legislation. They are the time-honored techniques available to Americans of good will. They should and must be exploited.

However, we should beware of two things. First, let us not go out looking for trouble when there is none readily available. Let us not magnify issues beyond their true proportions. Some other time we shall discuss the dangers of professional "defense" Jews. Let it suffice at this time to say that considering this fact, the issue at hand is being pursued intelligently and not hysterically.

Second, After effectively getting rid of open, public signs of racial animosity and religious bigotry, let us remember that it is below our dignity as Jews to indulge in party-crashing. I, as an individual, will not go where I am not wanted. And I, as a Jew, will certainly not go where I am not wanted. And the principle reason for this attitude is self-respect. I know that I can find plenty of solace and comradeship among people who do desire my friendship. I know that in my own faith and culture and tradition I can find more of what I really and truly want. Personally, I feel only contempt and pity for those half-baked Jews who object to "restricted" areas not on principle, as did the writer of the letter, but because of a frank desire to be "one of the crowd", to become known as a Jew who is enough of a "good Joe" to be accepted even by overt anti-semites. It is a dastardly and reprehensible attitude which comes from inferiority, fear and cowardice.

So that while we should strive for the liberty to live wheresoever we choose, we should not live just anyplace. While we strive to open the doors of closed societies, we should not seek actual entrance into them. In short, anti-defamation is but one short step. That alone merely makes one an anti-anti-Jew. It takes much more to make a real, full Jew.

The kernel of this idea we have been trying to expound can be found hidden in one of the key verses of today's Sidra. The bondsman, or slave, no matter when he was bought, was to be set free on the "Yovel" or Jubilee Year. At the sound of the Shofar ^{on} ~~at the end of~~ Yom kippur day of that year, all slaves were given their freedom. The Bible teaches us this great declaration of freedom in the following words, eloquent for all their simplicity: "U'KRASSEM DROR BA'ARETZ L'CHOL YOSHVEHA YOVEL HI TIH'YEH LACHEM". The English translation is probably familiar to you: "and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof; it shall be a jubilee unto you". Liberty! what that must have meant to the bondsman, torn from home and family for so long, waiting so impatiently for this fiftieth year. Liberty - to return to a wife, a mother, a brother, to children whom poverty has forced him to desert. He now could go where he wished, when he wished and how he wished.

A more exact definition of DROR which we translate as "liberty" is given by the commentator Rashi. DROR, he says, is derived for DAYAR, "ki'medayer bei dayri, she'dar be'chol makom she'hu rotseh", a traveller, who can live wherever it pleases him to live. That, then, is the very essence of DROR-liberty - to live wherever you wish, not to face the "restricted" sign on the property or the word in the contract or advertisement. And what is one way to achieve it? "UKRASSEM DROR", proclaim that kind of liberty: publish it, declare it, debate it, legislate it, write to the editor about it, demand it. Without making an issue of the liberty to reside where you wish, you can never get it. The "restricted" sign has to be shouted down, begged down, cajoled down.

But that is only one half the story. For the Bible does not end there. The privilege of going where you want to does not mean that you go just anywhere. For the bondsman to gain DROR, liberty, alone, to travel from city to city and wander from hamlet to hamlet, following his own weakened whim or the smell of a free handout, is passing from one tragedy to a greater one. It is an endless journey of tragedies, with the house of the master as only the first stop.

What then does the Torah advise this bondsman, this man whose movements were restricted, who could not live just anyplace he wished? Read the ~~very~~ end of that very verse: "VE'SHAVTEM ISH EL ACHUZASSO, VE'ISH EL MISHPACHTO TASHUVU", "and ye shall return every man unto his heritage and every man unto his family". Here, friends, is the culmination of true freedom - each man to his heritage, each to his ACHUZA. Go back to your own origins, to your own traditions, your own faith and your own family. In a word, Come Home. Stop crashing other people's parties; make your own. Uproot anti-Jewishness; but reaffirm your own Jewishness. Don't try to break into others' homes when the doors of your own are wide open for you. The final achievement of DROR, of liberty, is in self-respect and being true to yourself.

We will not gain an iota of stature or recognition from our adversaries, or, for that matter, even from our non-Jewish good friends, if we will desert our ACHUZA and cringingly beg to partake of theirs. The cry of the Bible this morning is: Come Home, home to your heritage in which you will find your glory; the heritage of Torah and faith and meaningfulness and warmth and decency and G-dliness and Tradition.

And this ACHUZA, friends, bears no "restricted" sign upon it. It is a heritage which says, in the words of the Prophet, "HALO AV ECHAD LE'CHULANU", all men have One Father; it is a heritage which declares with the Sages of the Mishna, KOL YISROEL YESH LA'HEM CHELEK L'OLAM HA'BA, all Jews, no matter what their color or affiliation, have a share in the world-to-come, and that the CHASIDEI UMOS HA'OLAM, the pious and moral gentiles are equally entitled to that OLAM HABA; it is a heritage which causes the Rabbis of the Talmud to insist: MAI CHAZI DE'DAMACH SAMMIK TFEI MI'DAMI D'CHAVRECH, that your blood is no redder than your neighbor's; it is a heritage wherein the great Biblical story of Creation relates that unlike animals, Man was **breathed one**, so that all his descendants might know that they are equal before the Lord. It is a proud and glorious and beautiful and G-dly heritage - without a "restricted" clause.

And may I, with your kind indulgence, go one step further in understanding the deeper import of this holy verse. Let us pull the problem onto a higher level than the sociological one, on a level higher than the newspaper or real estate or anti-semitism. Let us discuss this matter of DROR, of liberty, its opportunities and its direction, on a spiritual and religious plane, one which cuts through right to the heart and soul of every thinking ~~individual~~ man and woman.

It was the great sage Rabbi Akiva who, in two carefully chosen words, expressed the meaning of DROR in the spiritual life of Man. HA'RESHUS NESUNAH - permission is given. That is, every person has freedom of choice, free will, to live the kind of life he wants to. Every man has his DROR, the opportunity to live not only where he wants to, but also how he wants to. In his attempts to release himself from his bondage and slavery, from his servility to the dulling and deadening daily and meaningless routine, in his search for meaning in life, every man and woman is at liberty to either accept G-d and Torah or reject Him and choose any other way of life. There is no coercion. This choice, that each and every one of us must sooner or later make, is the ultimate expression of freedom, and the one with the most glorious or most devastating results. It is the Great Choice, against which everything else is insignificant, and we are free to choose what we wish. In this act of perfect DROR, liberty or freedom, a man can choose to center his life in the Marketplace, where profit and self-indulgence and materialism are his articles of faith. Or he can take a long deep look into his own soul and choose the House of G-d, where holiness and decency and kindness are his mainstays. He can choose between being a DAYAR, a resider, in the Golf-course with its ~~fa~~ devotion to pleasure and time-killing, or he can choose Home, where warmth and beauty and love and devotion reign supreme. UKRASSEM DROR ~~BEHAL~~ BA'ARETZ LE'CHOL YOSHVEHA, liberty, a right to choose the residence for your soul, is given to all the world and all the inhabitants thereof.

That is the opportunity that G-d gives to us, bondsmen of the world, if we desire to escape the boredom of meaningless existence and look for a place where we can really thrive. But immediately afterwards comes the suggestion: VE'SHAVTEM ISH EL ACHUZASSO, return to your own possession and heritage; VE'ISH EL MISHPACHTO TASHUVU, return to your families. O Jew, grandchild of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, you whose father had the faith to step into a Red Sea and then see it split, you whose fathers trudged thru a burning desert with parched mouths and empty stomachs and nothing but a G-dly cloud to lead them, you whose fathers included brilliant geniuses like Maimonides and heavenly poets like Yehudah Halevi, whose fathers remained firm before a cruel Inquisition and preferred the burning stake to the cross, you whose brothers walked proudly over the threshold of gas-ovens with an ANI MA'AMIN on their lips, ^{you who were brothers... in Israel...} return, return to your families, return to that great family of faith in G-d, trust in Torah, and loyalty to Israel. Grasp again that proud ACHUZA, that heritage which is yours. Come home, Jew, come home, we're waiting long enough for you.

The last several centuries have seen the Jew certainly take advantage of his DROR, his religious freedom of choice, the liberty to live how he wishes to. Some of our people have bowed before the god of Communism, only to learn that now its true colors show when it puts forth its "restricted" sign eliminating any and all Jews as an "undesirable element". Some have put their faith and sought redemption in the naive 19th-century belief in Progress and Science, only to see it grow into an unmanagable Frankenstein in this century, bellowing forth mushroom-shaped clouds. Progress faces the "restricted" sign. Some have tried Ethical Culture, others have tried assimilation. They are wanderers, aimlessly hopping from station to station on the great road which leads nowhere. Come back, says G-d, each to his heritage, to Torah, and each to his family, to Israel.

That message, then, is the message of the Jubilee of DROR. You are free to live where you wish and how you wish. But live like a Jew, return to your heritage. If there ever was a Jubilee year, this is it. Think of now as the YOVEL. It is

YOM KIPPUR and the SHOFAR is blown. Listen to that Shofar-call in your own hearts.

The choice is now yours. You are at liberty to live how you wish. But return, return home. Come home. The Synagogue is open. The Torah is waiting to be read.

G-d is waiting for us to move in, All he wants is a lease - that we shall never again move away from this, our residence in His and our ACHUZA.

Benedictions

This afternoon, at our Sab. dinner tables, we shall repeat your offer of 1113 & our promise of perfect choice in the moving melodies of the 1111NS:

- 1111NS / 1113

- 1111NS 1113

- 1111NS 1113

IN Thy vineyards O Lord, ~~shall~~^{will} we plant ourselves. Do Thou prosper us, make us fruitful and bless us.