

PASSOVER, 1958

HURRY AND HASTE

(or: "with all Deliberate speed") (or: "q-d-speed")

A-309

Modern life catches up each of us in its whirlpool of frenzied activity, making a virtue of speed and causing each of us to rush madly through the frenzied activities of each and every day. So unnerving is this fast pace that we seek desperately for some haven, for some place of refuge where we can slow down, breathe easier and find a bit of peace. And for this peace and calm we naturally turn to Religion, to shul, to Torah. We hope for the still, small voice of Religion to reassure us and soothe our keyed-up souls.

And yet if that is all we seek of Torah, we are going to be very disappointed. Quite to the contrary, the message of Passover is not "slow down" but "speed up." The key word of all Pesach is the Hebrew word CHIPAZON - haste, hurry. The first KORBON PESACH was to be eaten with loins girded, with feet on shoes, with staff in hand, VA'ACHALTEM OSO BE-CHIPAZON, "and ye shall eat it in haste", PESACH HU LA'SHEM, "it is the Lord's Passover."

The very MATZAH we eat is a symbol of rushing -- there is no time for the dough to rise, and so we have Matzoh instead of bread. According to Maimonides (Guide, III:46) not only the Matzoh and the eating of the Passover lamb were results of CHIPAZON, but all of the Passover ritual reflects this hastiness. We are forbidden to break a bone of the Korbbon because -- says Maimonides -- we must act as if we have no time for a leisurely meal. It is because of rushing that we may not cook but only roast the lamb. We must eat only in one house, and not go visiting from house to house the night of the Seder -- because we must rush through the meal. The Afikomen itself must be eaten before midnight. And in Maimonides' version of the Haggadah (end Hil. Chametz Umatzah), he begins the whole recital with the words BE-VEHILU YATZANU MI-MITZRAYIM -- we left Egypt in a hurry, in CHIPAZON.

Why this emphasis on haste during Pesach? Is it only to increase our neurotic obsession with speed? Do we not rush enough during the whole year?

And the answer is that we rush, yes -- but for the wrong things. We are always in a rush to make a living, but we are much too slow in making order out of life. I would use two different words to describe the right kind and the wrong kind of rushing: HURRY and HASTE.

"Whoever is in a hurry," said Lord Chesterfield in 1749, "shows that the thing he is about is too big for him. Haste and hurry are very different things."

JPas

Our unhappy, mad rush thru life is HURRY - an anxious scramble to ^{hide} ~~fill in~~ the void and emptiness of life and disguise it lest we come face to face with its utter barrenness. Hurry is not what the Torah recommends on Passover. On the contrary, when it comes to hurry, Judaism tells us to take it easy and digest our meal through HESEIVAH, thru reclining in aristocratic fashion. When the Torah commands CHIPAZON, it means: Haste. It means, to use a famous phrase from ^{the} ~~a~~ recent Supreme Court decision, ^{on integration,} "deliberate speed." It means not to waste time and fritter away our years in nonsense but to proceed directly to the core of life, to uncovering its inner meaning. The man who rushes to ^{play cards} ~~the theatre~~ is in a hurry. The one who rushes to shul is in haste. One rushes to waste time, the other to use it and exploit it.

I believe this is what the Talmud had in mind when it recorded the controversy between R.Akiva and R.Elazar ben Azariah (Ber.9a) as to what the Torah meant by eating the Korbon Pesach in CHIPAZON. R.Elazar said, that CHIPAZON means to rush through the meal and finish it by Midnight. R.Akiva said, to rush through the meal and finish it by dawn - - not CHATZOS, but BOKER. And the Talmud explains that the difference of opinion comes about because of a difference of interpretation of the word CHIPAZON. R.Elazar, who sets midnight as the deadline, understands this as CHIPAZON D'MITZRAYIM - we rush because the Egyptians hurried us out of the land. Midnight was the time the dreaded tenth plague struck, and so they rushed us out as fast as they could. R.Akiva says the word refers to CHIPAZON DE-YISRA'EL - - we must rush not because the Egyptians chased us, but because we were ourselves anxious to make our way out of this evil land and to attain the Freedom which G-d had promised us. And the Israelites, making haste because of their own will and understanding, were prepared to leave at dawn, at daybreak.

These two definitions represent the worthy and ~~un~~unworthy forms of rushing, of CHIPAZON. CH.DMITZRAYIM means Hurry, rushing because of external circumstances and reflecting no credit upon ourselves. CH.DYISRAEL means Haste, rushing because of our love of Freedom, our cherishing G-d's promise. It means rushing not because of the outer force of Egyptian oppression, but because of the inner pressur for Jewish expression. Hurry is neurotic confusion, haste is noble ambition. The hurry of CH.DMITZRAIM is purposeless and the

CH.DYUSRAEL is AD HABOKER, it takes us by the hand and quickly introduces us to the bright sunshine of the spring dawn. It does not permit us to linger on in the dark. *It tells us that (USA) is a 137/135, according to V, the (USA) became a 137/135 like a 200.*

childhood as long as possible, and making the growing-up process as slow as they can.

does ~~he~~ know haste. And so -- there is waste, and a national emergency, and the jitters in the world of officialdom. ^{R But if} There is no Haste -- ~~but~~ there is a good deal of Hurry: parents rush their children into the mad round of dating even before they are thirteen or younger yet, reflecting -- as some psychiatrists maintain -- their own basic insecurity and desire for recognition. We push them into the hurried world of night-^{social dancing and}

clubbing while at the same time taking them out of Hebrew school because, as we say, with all that tremendous amount of work from Junior High how can he possibly take Hebrew too. We keep them from haste in the process of growing up intellectually -- we are afraid they will sprain their brains -- and ethically -- how many teen-agers give charity? --

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and religiously. ^{because} We slow down their real growing up ^{and}, as one writer put it, we Americans "grossly overrate the number of karats in the so-called Golden Age of Childhood," as if we believed that the choicest thing about being a frog is being a tadpole. Our Jewish Tradition,

^{however}, never looked upon childhood or adolescence as a ^{hurried} whirl of fast dates. Our Rabbis cherished childhood for the GIRSA DE-YANKUSA, for the studies they pursued then, for the fact that what is learned in childhood is better remembered. ^{later} ~~This the~~ ^{however,} It is only now, that the modern Pharoah and his Egyptians -- Kruschev and the Communists -- have goaded America

into rushing things a bit, that American educators and parents are beginning to understand that they have ^{and were tragically wrong in substituting hurry for haste.} undersetimated children. It will be to the eternal credit of Jewish education

and specially the Day School movement that when other school systems in America were pushing for more hobbies and frills and all sorts of nonsense and postponing learning a second language until the eighth grade, we of the Day School were teaching a second ^{+ culture} language in Kindergarten!! Now, of course, ^{almost} everyone in American education agrees that that is the right policy -- but when we did it, it was a plicy of HASTE, of CH.DYISRAEL, the motives were inspired by love of Torah and love of learning. My only fear is that now that America has woken up to its previous follies, it should not be stampeded into ~~HURRY instae of HASTE~~, that the fear of Russian technology should not make us raise ^{ing} a

generation of uncultured engineers, of IBM machines in human form. That will be ^{again} CH.DMITZRAYIM, not CH.DYISREAL. Now we must make haste, but we must not hurry.

We must rush our youth culturally and religiously, ^{for, as Hillel said,} ~~but the CHIPZON must be of the nature~~ of V'IM LO ACH'SHAV EIMASAY -- if not now, when then? But if we are tempted to hurry them, to push them into CH.DMITZRAYIM in a senseless piling up of technological courses, then on Passover we caution and say: HESEIVAH too is a Mitzvah. Take it easy. Make haste, but don't hurry.

This message of rushing things Jewishly, of haste but not hurry, is one which is important to all of us. You heard the report of the President of the Cong. about the Building Campaign. Our Building Committee has very properly refused to be rushed into hurrying things, to a premature effort, into CH.DE-MITZRAYIM. What the Committee is doing is attempting to practice Haste, CH.DYISRUEL. It wants to move with all deliberate speed to achieve the object for which the Congregation appointed it. This is the only proper course for it to follow, and we of the Cong. must congratulate them for moving fast, but in haste and not in hurry.

Perhaps one of the most moving and pathetic documents illustrating this Jewish teaching of CHIPAZON is one which was written by the famous columnist Max Lerner after the recent death of his father. Max Lerner is a great liberal, a professor, and an editor and now author as well as columnist for the N.Y.Post. The article he wrote after his 87-yr old father passed away is a minor masterpiece. And yet, it seems, Max Lerner in a way tells us more about himself and his generation than about his father and his generation. His father had studied in a Yeshiva in Russia and came here with his family in 1907. He went through familiar odyssey of immigrant jobs, from one to the other, until he settled in the one of his first love: Hebrew teaching. He was, as Lerner says, a quiet man who was never a big success at anything and who did not make a great noise in the world - but he loved and was loved, and enjoyed his children. Now listen to this:

When I saw him toward the end of his illness, while he could still talk, he asked me to bring his notebooks. They were a confusion of ledgers, journals, loose sheets, on which over the years he had written his reflections on a variety of themes, covering his life within the world...dealing with the early Prophets and the latter day secular figures...

I am, alas, an ignorant man. With all my years of schooling I am unable to read the languages in which my father wrote, as my sons are already able to read mine. I shall save the bundle of pages on which he spent the burden of his hours, driven as he was by a strange necessity to find a garment for what he felt and dreamt.

Some day I may repair my ignorance and discover what thoughts they were that coursed through the mind of this patient, reflective man.

I wonder if you can appreciate the tragedy in these lines - - indeed, I wonder if Max Lerner appreciated it when he wrote them. Here is a bright, prolific writer, who must write a daily column which is read avidly and admired by thousands, including myself;

who lectures far and wide -- only last year he spoke in Springfield; who teaches in a college in Massachusetts; who recently wrote a very important book on American civilization. We are not speaking now about a spoiled American youngster. We are talking about an intellect -- an egghead, not a blockhead. What a fantastically busy man he must be -- the daily column with the press' deadlines, the rushing to make intercity trains and airplane flights, rushing to class and back to the city, meeting with publishers... by all means a life of CHIPAZON. And yet this man, with time for everything else, rushing for every cause, a master of the culture of this day -- this man cannot understand the words of his own beloved father! This man of rush, rush, rush for everything else and a past master of the written word has never taken the trouble to learn either Hebrew or Yiddish -- his father's languages. This man who writes so knowledgably about the ploitics of Nehru and the economics of Ghana -- must say "I am, alas, an ignorant man" when it comes to a simple Hebrew letter. The man who rushed to absorb so much at school, took his time when it came to his father's tongue. And so the man of CHIPAZON must now write -- and how profound is the shame -- "Some day I may repair my ignorance and discover what thoughts coursed through the mind of this patient, reflective man."! There is hurry for a deadline, hurry for another lecture tour, hurry for the latest "Congressional Record," hurry to get out another book ^{+ grind out another article} -- but no rush and haste at all when it comes to understanding your own father -- then it is only "some day"! And until then, you take your time (until it is too late), and the old father who for 87 years recorded his tendrest thoughts in the language of Moses and Isaiah, that old father has no son to lend him an ear, his most cherished ideas remain closed to his brilliant son, his loftiest meditations saved up so lovingly throughout the years now fall on deaf ears and are greeted with a thunderous silence -- "some day I may ^{and meanwhile a sweet, intelligent old man goes down into his grave, sinks into eternal oblivion} repair my ignorance." I am not blaming Max Lerner, who happens to be my favorite columnist. I am blaming a whole generation of Max Lerner's who ~~are~~ caught up in the CHIPAZON DEMITZRYIA and have never learnt the CHIPAZON DYISRAEL, who hurry but are never in a haste, who feel compelled to speed in order to catch up with the fast moving events of the day, but fail to respond to the inner needs of the Jewish self, and leave those needs for

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"some day".

This is a question each of us must put to himself: is my CHIPAZON of the Egyptian variety or of the Jewish kind? Is my rushing hurry or haste? Is it the neurotic rush which concentrates on the ephemeral and unimportant, or the creative rush which centers on the eternal and the significant? Are we rushing only to make money, or also to live right? Are we in mad pursuit of entertainment, or do we make haste to fill our lives with MITZVOS UMAASIM TOVIM, with noble thoughts and deeds? In a word: are we rushing away from life, or towards it? Pesach emphasizes CH.DEYISRAEL - the kind of rush which will continue our Tradition, which will keep open the lines of communication between past and present, not those which will cut them off. CHIPAZON DEYISRAEL means to make haste so that we may better listen to our old fathers and speak to our young children, so that all of us remain YISRAEL, so that neither we nor our children become MITZRAYIM, assimilated into the common culture; so that we will be hurried headlong into the shivering midnight (15th) / 15th, but speed quickly to a new dawn (16th) / 16th.

Our life today is too fast-moving for anyone to be slow and survive. But if it has got to be fast, then it must be for that which is worthy and noble and G-dly, not for that which is selfish and trivial and G-dless - - CH.DEYISRAEL, and not CH.DEMITZRYIM.

To make haste in the Jewish way is, then, the message of Passover and the meaning of all its laws. Perhaps it is this very kind of Jewish haste, this CH.DEYISRAEL, that was in the mind of the great sage and translator of the Bible to Aramaic, Yonathan ben Uziel, who translates the word CHIPAZON - ye shall eat it in haste - as BE-VEHILU DE-SHECHINAH MAREI DE-ALAMA, in haste - - rushed by G-d, Master of the World. He meant to tell us, and all of this holiday means to tell us, that when we rush because of love of G-d and ^{and Israel} Torah, when we rush for the sake of high ideals and noble aspirations, then G-d is with us, then the SHECHINAH guides our steps and gives us speed, then the Master of the World shares our haste with us.

On this Pesach that is precisely what I wish every one of you: the G-dly, Jewish kind of CHIPAZON, the rush and haste in which the Shechinah participates. In a word:

G-D-SPEED!!