

"KISSINGER AND THE JEWS"

I do not remember ever publicly discussing Secretary of State Henry Kissinger since he was catapulted into national prominence. There are two reasons for this. First, I have a natural aversion to discussing politics from the pulpit. Second, I was unsure as to whether he is -- to put it quite primitively -- good or bad for the Jews, or, equally important, good or bad for America.

However, two events of this past week have shaken me and compel me morally to speak out. These two are, the letter-article by Joseph Alsop published in last Sunday's New York Times Magazine Section, and the reports during the week of the visit by Dr. Kissinger and his family to his native Furth in Germany.

Like everyone else, I was always fully and keenly aware of the Jewish origins of Mr. Kissinger, and was subjected to the resulting ambivalence and even apprehensiveness. Yet, I have strictly refrained from criticizing him on Jewish grounds, hoping that his apparent aversion to Jewishness personally would not affect his role and power and success as Secretary of State. That is why I made no comment publicly, and did not approve of others commenting publicly, when he married out of the faith; when he did so on the Sabbath; and when he used a Christian Bible at personal and official ceremonies. I did not even make any public comment -- although in retrospect, perhaps I should have -- when Professor Gil C. AlRoy charged (an accusation for which I did not hear any denial) that one of the first acts of Dr. Kissinger as Secretary of State was to revoke the standard procedure whereby Jewish employees of the Department are excused from work on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

We understood, as well we ought to, that Henry Kissinger was appointed not as a Jew but as a political scientist and a diplomat. Intuitively, I knew that his Jewishness would not necessarily provide any direct benefit for the cause of Judaism or Israel in the world. I did, however, hope that it would not harm us. I believed that his success on the world scene would be good for him, for the United States, and for the world -- and hence for American Jews and for the State of Israel.

Certainly we had no right to object to his desire to work on the global level and to keep foremost in his mind the larger causes of America and world peace. Indeed, concerns of every Jew ought not be parochial but should be universal.

We read today, "And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt for seventeen years (Gen. 47:28). Why is it important to mention Egypt in this biblical summation of Jacob's life? Would it not be more appropriate to say that Jacob lived seventeen years "after he was reunited with Joseph," or "in the land of Goshen?"

Rabbi Meir Simhah of Dvinsk offers the following answer: There are many kinds of Zaddikim (righteous people). The lowest level is one who is righteous for himself. His main concern is his own spiritual welfare. Greater than him is one who is concerned with his family. Greater yet is one whose concerns extend to include his entire community. But greater than all is one whose circle of attention, worry, and beneficence embraces the whole country and the whole world. Jacob was such a Zaddik. He lived not only for himself or his family or his own country (Goshen), but for all of Egypt. Hence, "And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years." That is why we read, towards the end of the portion, that when he died אֲנִי אֶבְרָהָם וְאֶתְרָהָם וְאֶתְרָהָם וְאֶתְרָהָם -- "this is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians" (Gen. 50:11). It is because Jacob lived not only for himself and his family but for all Egypt (and hence the rabbinic tradition that in the merit of

Jacob's righteousness the seven-year famine of Egypt was suspended as long as he was alive), that all of Egypt mourned for him and grieved at his death.

Hence, the greater the Jew, the wider his concerns. And yet there is a world of difference between this genuine Jacobian universalism and the artificial and often disingenuous universalism too often proffered by many Jews for whom this is merely a cover-up for Selbst-hast and ethnic self-denigration. The Jacob type begins from a powerful center, and his humanitarianism radiates outward, and thus is comprehensive. But he has priorities. He knows that a man who does not love himself cannot love his neighbor, and one who does not love his neighbor cannot love those distant from himself, and if one cannot love his fellow men -- in the flesh -- then you may discount his abstract love of "mankind." Whereas the other type of universalism is one in which a man has turned against the core of his own being, and lives only on the periphery.

It simply is not true that for a Jew to be great, he must forget his origins. One can go through a whole catalogue of great Jews of modern times who did not indulge in this vulgar self-forgetfulness. Professor Albert Einstein was at least as great in science as Dr. Kissinger is in diplomacy. Yet he never denied, and always knew that he is, a Jew and even a Zionist. In varying ways, this was true of Justice Cardozo and Justice Brandeis. One can mention Arthur Goldberg, Dr. Rabi, and many others in this respect.

Dr. Kissinger is an illustration of how high an assimilated Jew can rise in the United States, and how low he can fall in the esteem of his fellow Jews.

When Jacob died, there was "grievous mourning" for Egypt. I wonder if, Heaven forbid, as long as Henry Kissinger functions as Secretary of State there will be grievous worry and regret and grief for Jews and their interests in the world!

A painful example of this Kissinger attitude to the Jews is the Alsop article of this past week. Basically, it was a bitterly critical attack on Israel by a former friend and, if read carefully, full of dire, veiled threats against Israel and American Jewry. The article is as dangerous as it is persuasive -- for Joe Alsop is nothing if not a persuasive writer. And it is even more perilous for us because it comes from one who has been a friend for a long time. There can be little doubt that this article was inspired by Dr. Kissinger. For one thing, the author implies that Kissinger is perfect and infallible, and therefore warns Israel to obey him and signals American Jews that they had better keep quiet. But how many people other than Dr. Kissinger recognize that he is infallible? Moreover, Mrs. Kissinger, in a recent magazine article, maintained that the Kissingers have few personal and social friends; the Alsops are an important exception. So we must accept the Alsop article as a Kissinger broadside. And when Mr. Alsop describes as unworthy any assertion that Kissinger is bending over backwards against Israel, trying to be more Gentile than the Gentiles, we may be sure that this is Dr. Kissinger speaking. And this I now categorically reject. It is not unworthy of me to think so. It is unworthy of Dr. Kissinger to perform such self-hating acrobatics.

The Israelis whose opinions I have sought on the effect of Kissinger's Jewishness on his policies, have told me that their major concern is that because he is Jewish he thinks that he knows what is best for Israel, better than the Israelis do. Hence, if we are now to accept the Kissinger-Alsop thesis, it means that we Jews must now place our fate and our fortune in the hands of Dr. Henry Kissinger -- the Intermarried Messiah.

Secretary Kissinger has staked his reputation on détente. Certainly every civilized person wants to avoid nuclear war. Yet, the question of tactics, and the degree to which America is willing to compromise with the Soviet Union, is crucial and critical. Mr. Kissinger did not refrain from risking détente in prolonging the war in Viet Nam. He was willing to face up to Russia in supporting anti-Soviet groups in Angola, until Congress stopped him. He was not afraid to be tough with the Russians, and did not fear that this would jeopardize détente. But the exception to all this is -- Israel! This lonely, little country must be pressured and pushed and bullied and reassessed even after (or maybe because) it accepted, in a moment of weakness, Kissinger's original insistence that Israel let the Egyptian Third Army escape during the Yom Kippur War.

But equally or even more upsetting than the Alsop article and the Kissinger policy generally was the report of the visit of Kissinger and his family to Furth this past week. Dr. Kissinger and his parents issued the warmest and most polite statements about their native city. But nary a word about the Holocaust, not a word about the Nazis who drove them out of that city! I was outraged by his callous contempt for Jewish history, and his inferential belittling of Jews not only alive but dead. His silence thunders in my ears and heart. Of course, I am not really surprised. I have been told that Dr. Kissinger, during his first visit to Israel, had to be "persuaded" to visit Yad Vashem, and accepted only when he was told that every other foreign minister visiting Israel had done so.

As a Jew and as a human being, I am furious at this failure to say even a word about those who, unlike the Kissingers, did not make it. All Jews living today are alive only by a twist of fate -- a twist of fate that, at the same time, condemned six million to death. The Kissingers were lucky, very lucky. Could there be no mention, then, of those less fortunate than they, the Jews of Furth who never got out on time? Does one just forget them? If the Kissingers were so sensitive to their German hosts that they refused to mention the Nazis, could they not at least have made an oblique mention about some anonymous government who a mere thirty years ago butchered one third of our people? If Dr. Kissinger is so uncomfortable with his Jewishness, could he not at least have mentioned that the Nazi war machine was responsible for the death of millions of others? Or forgetting history, could they not at least have made some kind of reference to a hope that in the future massacres of innocent civilians will never again take place?

As luck would have it, I read two other articles on the same day that I read of the Kissinger trip to Furth. One of them was in reference to the revived Nazi party in Argentina, and in the United States as well, who have made a point of insisting that six millions never were killed during the war. Actually, there were only a few tens of thousands of Jews killed, but Jewish leaders want to manipulate the world and so they created the myth of six million...

The second item was a historical one. In Spring 1945, three trucks, loaded with eight to nine tons of human ashes from Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp were dumped into the canal in order to conceal the high rate of Jewish execution. So: two stories of the cover-up of Jewish suffering at the hands of the Nazis.

Are Dr. Kissinger and his family, luxuriating in their fond memories of pre-war Furth, collaborating in this demonic forgetfulness, this foul cover-up? I am moved to ask Dr. Kissinger, in the words of Mr. Welch directed at Senator McCarthy at the climax of the famous trial of the latter, "Sir, have you no decency left?"

Perhaps it is for the good of all of us, Jews, Israelis, Americans, and the world, that the tenure of this man is drawing to a close and that he will be able

to return to the obscurity from which he emerged upon us. My only fear is that his policy of détente may yet prove to be more disastrous for America than for Israel. If that policy proves indeed to be a failure, and America is mortally weakened at the expense of Soviet Russia, Americans may well blame not Kissinger, but the Jews -- whom Kissinger did so much to disown. Professor Einstein once said, that if his theory of relativity proves correct, Germany will say that he is a German, France will say he is a Frenchman, and England will say that he is a citizen of the world. If it proves to be incorrect, England will say that he is a German, Germany that he is a Frenchman, and France that he is a Jew.

On his deathbed, the Patriarch Jacob blessed and reproached his twelve children. When it came to two of them, Simeon and Levi, the old patriarch was very harsh indeed. He said, *בְּסוּדוֹם אֶס תִּבְנֶה נַפְשִׁי, בְּקִהְלוֹם אֶס תִּחַד כְּבוֹדִי*, "Into their counsel may my soul not enter, and in their assembly let my honor not be united" (Gen. 49:6). Jacob did not want to have his name associated with these two tribes. He did not want to be mentioned in connection with them. Our Rabbis say that his will was respected on two occasions. One was when Zimri, Prince of the Tribe of Simeon, performed an outrageous immoral act in public, and his entire lineage was mentioned -- but Scripture stopped at Simeon, and did not mention that Simeon is the son of Jacob. Similarly, when Korah challenged the authority of Moses and fomented an insurrection, he too had his lineage described by Scripture, and again it stops with Levi and fails to mention that the latter is the son of Jacob. However, there is one version (in the Talmud, Sanhedrin 109b) where Korah is mentioned but Zimri is not, and instead the reference is to the spies whom Moses sent out to Canaan. This is a difficult version, because the spies were not unique to Simeon, but came from all the tribes. I suggest that what the Rabbis meant to emphasize is that Jacob did not want his name mentioned with regard to two types of Jewish anti-Jewish activity: that represented by Korah, the bitter and brutal attack against Jewish leadership, and the spies who symbolized the hatred for Eretz Israel.

It is in this sense that we must part company with Dr. Henry Kissinger. For our own integrity, our self-respect, and out of fear of this man -- both his successes and his failures -- we must be done with him. Let us paraphrase the biblical admonition. *בְּסוּדוֹ אֶס תִּבְנֶה נַפְשִׁינוּ*, "In his counsel may our souls not enter." Let us openly disassociate from him. He wants not to be a part of our people -- its history and its destiny, its suffering and its joys. So be it. Let us never again, in our talk or in our publications, make reference to this man's Jewishness. And let us insist that he be done with his occasional shrewd remarks to the press or to diplomats that, of course, he would not jeopardize the lives of Jews or other oppressed peoples because he too is a refugee from oppression. A man who "forgets" millions of his fellow sufferers, has lost the moral right to make use of their suffering and his own refugee status in furthering his own ends.

בְּקִהְלוֹ אֶס תִּחַד כְּבוֹדֵינוּ, "In his assembly let our honor not be united." Our Kavod (honor) ultimately will be better served if Henry Kissinger will succeed in severing whatever frail and residual bonds still tie him to the House of Jacob and the Children of Israel. Let us grant him his obvious wish to be dis-united with us.

That Kavod, that honor and dignity of Jacob and Israel, is assured and will be made manifest long after our Secretary of State will have retired to private life. The Redeemer will come to Zion -- and it will not be Henry Kissinger...

וְנַתְחַזְקֵךְ חַזֵּק חַזֵּק, "Be strong, be strong, and let us strengthen ourselves." Let us be strong in our outlook for the future, and in our faith in the God of Israel, and we shall find strength in and with each other.