

A-24

ee) Something which Leads to Faith:

ויהי עתה יום ראשון חג המצות... וישראל יצא ממצרים

Just as there is a level of understanding of G-d in and through history symbolized by the finger of G-d, the pointer or indicator, and by the hand of G-d, the molder and director of historical forces, so is there a greater and broader revelation of G-d symbolized by the arm of G-d, the zroa netuyah. The arm symbolizes power, and in this case the very source of those historical forces of which we speak. It is the zroa netuyah which gives impetus and power to all the great movements of the ages. And here too, in the revelation of the outstretched arm of G-d, the Egyptian and the Jew part.

1. The Egyptian becomes aware of the Arm of G-d:

a) Only as a Strong-Arm: (Ezekiel 18).

אין כח נטוי מלך מלכות

An Egyptian, even if he be an aristocratic Egyptian, a Pharaoh, can understand and appreciate and recognize the Arm of G-d only when it flexes its powerful muscles and strikes his own arm, breaking it hopelessly.

2. The Jew sees the arm of G-d from a different pair of national eyes:

a) The Arm Lovingly Outstretched to Aid the Needy: (Isaiah 33).

ה' יצא ידו לעזר הצדיק

b) The Arm of Redemption:

וה' יצא ידו לעזר הצדיק

The powerful yet kindly arms of G-d ready to embrace a suffering humanity.

In all levels of understanding, therefore, whether one can see only a finger, or as much as ~~an arm, or~~ a hand, or all of an arm, there are two ways of interpreting life: the Egyptian and the Jewish. And it is the basic Jewish optimism which has insured his survival through all the vicissitudes which have befallen him. For the Jew is optimistic indeed; he tries to reach G-d through construction, not destruction; through prayer, not plague; through benediction, not malediction; through morality, not idolatry; through creativity, not calamity; through faith and charity and devotion and redemption.

In these days of catastrophic upheaval and eruption of unleashed historical forces, it is important for us to understand these events as the Jew should. Whether one can barely detect the finger of G-d, or whether he can grasp the hand of G-d, or whether he can catch a glimpse of the great outstretched arm of G-d, he must look at it Jewishly, never like an Egyptian.