

A-260

A-260, Rabbi Norman Lamm, Israel Independence Sabbath,
"Emor" (Abot Chapter 2), 1957

Since last Independence Day a major change has come over the situation for Israel: it has lost the good will of the great powers. Before only the Arabs damned her, now no one has any love for her. This 9th birthday finds the United States and Russia both appeasing the Arabs and opposing the Israelis. Israel's very existence has been called into question, and she has been called upon to justify her ^{וְיָרָץ} survival as well as her attack on Egypt.

Israel has now been called every name under the diplomatic sun. Agressor, war-maker, offensive. And an argument repeated often enough can affect even the strongest partisans and make them over into opponents. Our Rabbis of the Midrash tell us that God showed Moses "Dor dor v'dorshav" and also the leaders of each generation, its prophets, its wise men ^(...וְיָרָץ...וְיָרָץ...וְיָרָץ) and so on. This means, that he showed him the "kohanim" of the future who would remain spiritually "bnei aharon". But also included in this vision, though less known, were each generation and its "gazlanim", and its "chomsanim", And we wonder: are these two "kohanim bnei aharon?" And the answer is: no. It is not that the descendants of Aaron will be

robbers and thieves, but, the meaning is, that despite their being the preachers and leaders and prophets and wise men of every generation, they will be called robbers and thieves... as though God said to Moses: they still are to Me, despite all the names so unjustly applied to them by others, "kohanim bnei aharon". And so when we find that Russia calls Israel an agressor, the United States calls her and unjust intruder, and India calls her a thief, we open the Bible and the "Midrash", and we find that God tells us that those whom others call, in their generations, both robbers and thieves, remain the "priests, the children of Aaron", the priests of all nations and the kingdom of holy people.

Why is Isreal right? Why do they remain the "priests the children of Aaron"? What is the underlying principle of Israel's claim to Statehood, its justification of Operation Sinai, and the reason for hostility against it? And the answer is: justice. *23 on 11.3*

Israel's claim is just--redemption is God's promise. Israel's political claim is just--for the destruction of *its independence* 2,000 years ago, and the 6 million moderns of our day, warrant its political revival.

Israel's military claim is just in Sinai--the right of a nation to defend its borders, its citizens, its very life. (Here I discuss the claim of the State Department

and Time Magazine that the Israeli Action was an outgrowth of its biblically primitive conception of "an eye for an eye". I explain the real meaning of that phrase in Jewish tradition). It is useless constantly to protest ~~xxxxxxxx~~ a monstrous nonsense of the Christian world in stigmatizing Judaism with barbarism in its concept of justice. It is useless because these Christian critics of Israel's justice have deluded themselves into thinking that talking love etc. and acting ignobly is quite all right; That "goodwill" can go with inquisition; that "peace on earth" can go with crusades; that "charity to all" can go with a Walter McCarran Act; that "Christian morality" can go along with the Dulles policy in all its various ramifications. In the philosophy and the theology of the Western world, justice is so inferior to love, it is beneath contempt. In ~~practice~~, they never attain to either love or justice. The great Rabbi Israel Salanter used to say, that the difference between past generations and ours, is that in the past a man was worried about his neighbor's economic condition, and his own spiritual welfare. Today, it is reversed...Israel has always maintained that justice is based on fairness, on a sense of equivalence, on crime and punishment. That love is indispensable, but that without justice it is a mockery. There was

no gentler soul in all history than Hillel. He was the most love-filled man who ever existed, the meekest man in all the world. He was a lover of humanity. The model of kindness. We are told in "The Ethics of the Fathers", which we read today, that he too saw a skull floating on the water. And what was his reaction?

Did he just cry? Did he mourn for all the unfortunate of the world? Did he blame only the actual murderers of this victim? Did he just neglect the entire incident because it was so revolting? No. With all the love and mercy in the world, justice must prevail. This was the decision of the meek and gentle and saintly Hillel. And so we hear from the mouth of Hillel the famous words: *עין תעביר עין תעביר* For every crime, there is punishment. This is the principle of equivalence, of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth;..for in Judaism, even a Hillel can understand the principle of "an eye for an eye". In Judaism, meekness goes with equivalence, Hillel with a "gulgolless" love with justice, Halakha with Agadah.

And how interesting is it to note the comment of Rashi on this Mishna: *על כל מקום שיש בו חילוק* --there are places that this Mishna is not read. What "places"? --the Vatican, the U.N., the State Department, the Kremlin! There are places--too many--in this world where this principle of love-with justice, where Hillel and "gulgolless" is unknown.

But despite the cry of "gazlanim-~~v~~'ghamsanim" by those who are insensitive to justice, we who follow it are true to Torah and justice; and Israel must of needs

remain "kohanim bnei aharon", as "mamlechess kohanim".

(By beginning with the theme of "chad gadya", the theme similar to "an eye for an eye" and the incident of the drowning with Hillel, this can be made into a Passover sermon.)