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## "WHAT ARE YOU DOING?"

Many of the ceremonies we perform at the Seder table were included in our Passover Ritual primarily to encourage the asking of questions. And yet one of the most provoking of questions concerns <sup>not</sup> any specific positive performance, but rather a strange and disappointing omission. There is one name that should be on our lips throughout the Seder, one personality about <sup>whom</sup> the whole Festival should be built; and yet he is not there. Why, we wonder, have the Children of Israel, in the course of the past 3,500 years, forgotten the one man who made Passover possible: Moses? In our Hagadah, we mention the Patriarch Jacob. We mention his evil uncle, Laban. We mention the villain of the story, Pharo. But we have absolutely nothing to say about the true Hero of the Exodus, who molded a conglomeration of Semitic slave-tribes into a Chosen People and led them from slavery to Freedom. Is this not a kind of treachery on our part? Is this not disloyalty to the greatest Jew who ever lived? Is this not, worst of all, sheer ingratitude?

And the answer to that question is a resounding "NO". It is not treachery or neglect or disloyalty or ingratitude. It IS a reflection of the Torah's outlook on all of life, and a profound expression of ageless Jewish thought on the question of Man's relationship to G-d. And that attitude and philosophy is: G-d, & not man, redeems. Only G-d, and not man, can save. Man is the tool of G-d, the means by which G-d directs the course of History. But it is G-d's wish, G-d's deed, G-d's victory. Men delude themselves when they believe, whilst playing the games of diplomacy and power-politics, that it is they who vanquish and wield power and determine the fate of nations. No, only in G-d does the ultimate power of defining the destinies of nations lie. Humans merely do His bidding.

This belief that political, physical and material power rests in G-d and is merely conferred upon men as messengers of the Almighty, does not apply only to tyrants and despots. It refers to any political or military leader. And it is for that reason that no mention is made of Moses in this commemoration of military victory and political independence. It is not the great Moses who redeemed Israel. It is G-d. VA'YOTZIANU HA'SHEM MI'MITZRAYIM, LO AL YDEI MALACH, V'LO AL YDEI SARAF, VE'LO AL YDEI SHALIACH, ELA HA'KADOSH BARUCH HU BI'CHVODO B'ATZMO - G-d took us out of Egypt - neither angels, nor any kind of special Divine messenger, but G-d Himself, in His own Divine Glory. Not even Moses can make any claim to redemption. Political and military victory is G-d's alone. So it was with the Egyptian Exodus, so it is with any and every such matter of political deliverance.

Does that mean that Moses has no importance as a person in his own right? Of course he does! But Moses is not the general or the diplomat. He is: MOSHEH RABEINU - Moses our Teacher. That is where Man comes into his own, into the full bloom and possession of his own achievements. In the material realm - politics, diplomacy, soldiery - we are only pawns; in the spiritual realms - Torah, teaching, Ethics - we become ~~so~~ creative, constructive, and entitled to recognition. YEHEI MORA RABACH K'MORA SHAMAYIM, our Sages counselled us: let the reverence for your teachers be on par with your reverence for G-d Himself. Here Man's creations are his. Here, and here alone, G-d accepts Man into a partnership. And it is here that we find the brilliant preeminence of Moses - as Teacher and Lawgiver.

I think that this profound Jewish view, reflected by the omission of Moses' name from the Hagadah, should be restressed and reemphasized now that the Yalta papers have been made public. There is much to say about these documents from a general point of view. But let us narrow our view to the purely Jewish aspects of this conference; for we have discovered that unofficially there was some talk about Jews and the Land of Israel. It appears, we learn for the first time, that the Big Three - Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin - all regarded themselves as Zionists. They ~~all~~ had all the right in the world to do so - for we Jews regarded them as such. At this conference, in which three mortals arrogated to themselves the right to control the destinies of peoples, these same three - or, more precisely, Roosevelt and Stalin - bequeathed upon themselves the titles of Zionists.

Certainly we regarded them as such - and as much more! We gave them a place in our hearts and hopes and prayers that we deny even to Moses! We saw them as the three Messiahs who would redeem Israel from the bloody gas-chambers and lead us to independence in Israel. We endowed them with the qualities of redemption and independent political and military might, on a par with G-d Himself. They became the repositories of our hopes and the subjects of our prayers. And look what happened since these three "Zionists" met at Yalta: Churchill, who still regards himself as a Zionist when he must reckon with American opinion, ~~was~~ the one who in 1922 tore Transjordan off from the body of Israel where it rightfully belonged, has since the war played apolitical game which lead the Labor Government to set up the separate Kingdom of Jordan in 1946 and fortify it with the Arab Legion, the most powerful Arab enemy Israel has. Stalin, the most recently discovered "Zionist", YIMACH SHMO, is the very self-same Stalin who persecuted Zionists with non-Zionists, whoever tried to keep alive the Jewish flame in the cold, bitter chambers of the Soviet State. It is he who put them behind bars and in slave labor camps, where Russian Zionsist are rotting to this very day. It is he who inspired the "Jewish Doctors" plot just before he died, just before G-d graciously put an end to his cruel machinations. And Roosevelt! Roosevelt the man whom all American Jews hailed as the Messiah ben David himself; whom we looked upon as a Divinity, whom we prayed not only for, but -almost - to; the Roosevelt whom we embellished with super-human wisdom, as our guide and saviour. This "Zionist", immediately after describing himself as such to Stalin, went to meet that backward potentate and petty tyrant King Ibn Saud, and after spending no matter than five minutes with that Near Eastern despot of the Desert, the great "Zionist" said that he learned more from him about Palestine in five minutes than he had from all others in all his life! Only G-d knows how greatly we have suffered in our aspirations because of this idolatrous trust that we put into generals and presidents and prime mimnisters and princes'.

We are ten years late in discovering that mistake. It is high time we took to heart the words of the Psalmist, AL TIVT'CHU B'NDIVIM, B'VEN ADAM SHE'EIN LO S'SHUAH, do not put your trust in princes, in mere mortals who themselves must seek redemption from G-d. Moses is not mentioned in the Hagadah, in the epic of poitical liberation and military victory just because we beleieve that here our faith is only in G-d. Let us not, therefore, place our faith in our own political and military leaders of our own day. I think that should go not only for the world leaders of America and Britain and the "estern world. I think it applies as well to the leaders of Israel. Neither Ben Gurion nor Sharret nor Lavon can reddeem us, deliver us, save us, protect us. Only G-d can, if He chooses. And if He so chooses, the Ben Gurions and other strong-men must not regard themselves as "men of destiny", but only as humble messengers graciously chosen by G-d to fulfill the historic mission of GEULAS YISRAEL, of the redemption of Israel. And then, when it is done, the peans will be sung ~~to G-d~~ not to Mapai or Mapam or individual politicians. Only in the realms of the spirit, in spiritual creativity and constructiveness, can man leave his own trademark and secure his copyright.

→ and what heads ~~two~~ for a world & for nations on large scale, holds ~~two~~ for individual persons.

It is told of the great Reb Yashe-Bear Soloveitchik, that when he was Rabbi of Slotsk he met a young man who had once been a pupil of his in the great Yeshiva of Volozhin. Asked him, "And what are you doing?". Said, "Thank G-d, I'M now in business and doing well". Talked more, later Rabbi: "And waht are you doing?" "Oh, wonderful, making good living, family is well, no worries".... "What are you doing?"... "But Rabbi, this is 3rd time you asked me that questuon, and I already told you that I'm very prosperous in business and that we are all healthy and well."... "Yes, son, but you're not answering my question. I asked, 'What are you doing?', and you say 'I'm wealthy and well'. But these are not what you are doing; these are what G-d is doing for you. I want to know what are you doing - are you studying Torah?...giving charity?...supporting a synagogue?...educating your children?...this is what you are supposed to do as a Jew, and here you can have the pride of accomplishment....it is concerning this that I asked, 'what are you doing?'"

That question is one we should constantly ask of ourselves: what are you doing? The businessman cannot answer that he has amassed a fortune. That is merely the will of G-d, and he is the innocent and fortunate recipient. He can answer: I treat my employees well, I am charitable, I take a healthy interest in Jewish education, I observe the Torah.

517 \* as in apoc pagan greece, but only to g-d, in tradition ethical & monotheistic Israel.



That, of course, is one of the weak points of our society. We have nourished the myth of Success, and have grown up and raised our children in the belief that a man's true value is determined by the fortune he can make starting from scratch. Who, after all, is the national hero of America? He is the Horatio Alger creation, the boy who, alone and unaided, ragged and hungry, "is plunged into the maelstrom of city life, but by his own pluck and luck he capitalizes on one of the myriad opportunities available to him and rises to the top of the economic heap" ("The Dream of Success", K. Lynn, p. 7). We make "the equation of the pursuit of money with the pursuit of happiness and of business success with spiritual grace" (ibid). And are not we American Jews as guilty of that build-up of financial and social success as the greatest good as is the rest of the population - or perhaps even more so? I am sure that almost everyone here this morning has at one time or another heard a remark of this kind made about a recent immigrant who had not achieved Success: "The fellow has been here for ten years, in America, and still hasn't made any money!" We have made of poverty not an unfortunate economic fact but a matter of personal vice. We have been deluded into thinking that Success - material, social, political - is Man's to achieve and design. When all that is a patent untruth. It is G-d who is the ZAN UMEFARNESS LAKOL, who provides all life with sustenance. Material success by a man is no virtue and should not be a source of pride. Only spiritual creativity is given to Man as the domain of his own personal conquests. HA'KOL BIYDEI SHAMAYIM CHUTZ MI'YIRAS SHAMAYIM, all is in the hands of G-d except the fear of G-d.

The kernel of our idea is found in a beautiful remark by that famous advocate of Isra el, R. Levi Yitzchak Berditchewer. This great Hassidic teacher ~~re~~ maintained that Passover is a time when G-d and Israel indulge in mutual compliments. Because, he said, we have two names for this festival: CHAG HA'MATZOS, the festival of the Matzos, and CHAG HA'PESACH, the festival of the passing over, i.e. the commemoration of the fact that when G-d punished the Egyptians, he passed over the homes of the Israelites and spared them. Thus, we Israelites, in tribute to G-d, call the holiday PESACH, whereas the Torah, speaking for G-d, calls it CHAG HA'MATZOS, the Matzoh festival, in honor of Isreael who baked this hasty-bread in faith that G-d was going to redeem them. But what we have here is more than a quaint observation that G-d and Israel have a mutual-flattery pact. We have the whole philosophy of Man's place in the world vis-a-vis G-d. When it comes to Pass-Over, to military conquests and political liberation and physical well-being, there Man has no part in the glory and the power - that is G-d's glory; it is CHAG HA'PESACH, a tribute to G-d. But where it comes to matters of faith, of nobility of soul, of spiritual strength and fortitude, there Man comes into his own. When the Israelites, a band of downtrodden slaves, armed with nothing but faith and hope, can abandon their master's homes - and with them the warmth of security and shelter and the fleshpots of Egypt - and determine to live - they and their families - on this miserable card-board cake, this poor-man's bread, all for the sake of a spiritual ideal and religious devotion, then that is a feat of which they can be eternally proud, and G-d Himself bestows on them the encomium of CHAG HA'MATZOS - it is in your honor, my children, that we celebrate this festival throughout the generations. For in this domain alone can man demonstrate his strength and his sovereignty, his creativity and his originality. In martial and material victories, neither Israel nor Moses is supreme - the true Hero of the Haggadah is only G-d, for Whom we celebrate CHAG HA'PESACH. But in the domain of faith and morals and ethics and goodness and devotion - there Israel is the Hero of CHAG HA'MATZOS, and there, in Torah, does Moses attain his lofty status so that all of Torah becomes TORAS MOSHEH.

That, in essence, explains the absence of the name of Moses from the Haggadah. That is the Jewish way of appreciating G-d and appreciating Man. That is the teaching of Passover, of both CHAG HA'PESACH and CHAG HA'MATZOS: that we must each ask ourselves "What are you doing?", and live so as to be able to answer that question fully, properly and proudly.