

"THE PASCHAL LAMB AND THE SACRED BULL"

"Disgust at duplicity," and important scholar recently said, "is the deepest running tide anywhere at this moment."

Although I do not identify with the extravagant charge of "hypocrisy" so lightly and self-righteously hurled by the young at the older generation -- it is often a sign of simple-mindedness and insensitivity to the complexities of life -- yet, at bottom, I feel that it is unquestionably true. We are riven by deceit, riddled with duplicity, and infected with hypocrisy. This is especially true of the so-called "Establishment", of government and society's leadership.

This theme is relevant to Passover because the Exodus story is, in a sense, a record of the exposure of such national hypocrisy sanctified as a policy of state and government.

The following analysis of the Passover narrative as an exercise in debunking official hypocrisy, is based on an insight by a cousin of mine whom I unfortunately never knew. I am told that had he survived, he would have been one of the great Jewish leaders of our generation. He published his ideas in Poland on the eve of World War II, shortly before he was to be murdered by the Nazis together with his wife and daughters, when he was in his early twenties. His name Rabbi Yehoshua Baumol, רבי יחזקאל באמול. May these words serve to be *אמן* -- a tribute to his blessed memory.

We Jews know of sanctified hypocrisy because we have been its victim throughout so much of our history. Anti-Semitism could hardly have existed without official duplicity. And anti-Semitism begins in Egypt. The sign of blood on Jewish homes in Egypt was a fateful symbol of that which was to follow us throughout the ages.

Consider Pharaoh's problem: he could not simply announce genocide. That would not do, because it would be bad for his public-relations image. Egypt was, after all, the greatest center of culture in antiquity, and for an empire of such might and such pretensions to wipe out an entire people by murdering its children, was unthinkable. So he developed the following strategy: official innocence, and leaving the dirty work to underlings.

Note that at first Pharaoh did not send his police and soldiers to kill Jewish children. He did not publicly announce any "final solution" of the Jewish problem in Egypt. Instead, he whispered his plans to the people he expected to carry them out: *אשר יאמר אליו* Pharaoh "speaks to the midwives", he "calls for the midwives", and asks them to kill all male children. No one knows about it but these few women. If it gets out, he can blame the entire policy on a few backward and overzealous and primitively anti-Semitic midwives. But he is guiltless.

This became a historic precedent. Kishinev or the Krystalnacht or Auschwitz -- depending who was in the witness box -- or Biafra or My Lai or Bangla-Desh -- all were the work of "irresponsible underlings" while the authorities remained innocent of any wrongdoing.

How do we reconcile the Torah's story of the Paschal Lamb with

history's record of the Sacred Bull?

The answer that my cousin suggests is that Egyptian officialdom was two-faced. To the outside world they showed the innocence of the lamb -- pity and compassion and gentleness. They acted as if their god and inspiration was the lamb. But in actual fact, their effective guide and real symbol was the bull, Apis, with its implied brutality and savagery and pitilessness, with its naked power and heartless truculence.

So what the Torah is doing is ripping the hypocritical mask off the face of Pharoah in Egypt. The Israelites, the Torah says, will now kill your paschal lamb, because it is a fake symbol. They will reveal its meaninglessness in your lives and show that it has no relevance to your conduct. It will reveal that the true Egyptian god is Apis, the black bull, the apotheosis of evil, the theory that might makes right.

The lamb was sacrificed by the Israelites as פסח the Passover sacrifice, and Egypt stands exposed as the devotee of Apis, the sacred black evil bull.

This form of hypocrisy against which the Torah in פסח protested was not peculiar to ancient Egypt. It is, as much, a malady of the modern world. "Le plus ça change, le plus c'est la même chose." A contemporary German novelist, Gunter Grass, has written, "we had to create a new German word after the war -- Schreibtischtöter -- a murder at the desk. We did not have any laws against them. Only the men who were really at the concentration camps and did the dirty work for somebody else in the Auschwitz trials."

Indeed, the sacred bulls tried to pass themselves off as paschal lambs.

But there is one major difference between Egyptian hypocrisy and the contemporary variety, and that is that Pharoah failed whereas the sacred bulls of the modern world have by and large succeeded. Only a few weeks ago we read in the press that the very man who designed all of Auschwitz was exonerated at his trial in Austria on the grounds that he, the very architect and designer of the greatest death camp in history, did not know what it was to be used for!

And this took place at approximately the same time that the U.N. accepted the protestation of innocence of Lebanon and other Arab countries in their charge against Israel for raiding the southern portion of Lebanon from where murderous attacks have been made on innocent Israelis. The Lebanese and the Arabs and their friends pleaded the innocence of lambs being victimized by the wolf Israel, and the UN went along and condemned Israel for defending itself -- by cleaning up that very territory which Lebanon publicly had named "Fatahland," the area from which they had allowed the so-called guerillas to operate against Israel!

And this took place only slightly before the UN Human Rights Commission accused Israel of "war crimes and affront to humanity!" How ironic that this took place just before peaceful elections in the occupied territories; and, even greater irony, that this commission

