APRIL 15, 1960 -

PIDYON HA-BEN....SON OF PAUL BARIS....CHOL HAMOED PESACH

- 1. Happy coincidence of Pidyon Haben on Pesach.
- 2. Commandment of P.H. evidently one of most important. Is one of the 4 passages included in our Tefillin.
- 3. In that passage of KADESH LI KOL BEKHOR, find strange turn of events. G-d tells Moses very briefly and succintly, KADESH LI KOL BEKHOR PETER KOL RECHEM BIVNEI YISRAEL BA'ADAM UVABEHEMAH LI HU. And them Moses turns to Israel, and gives them a whole string of three various laws, plus a reminder that G-d took them out of Egypt! Specifically, recalls the mitzvot of a) chametz and matzah, b) korbon Pesach, and then c) bekhorot. Why this elaboration over and above what G-d had commanded?
- 4. The answer strikes at the very core of the meaning of Pidyon Haben, and also at one of the major motifs of Yab Judaism. For the exodus story is essentially based on the competition between Nature and History, between subservience to the natural forces and the tr nscending of them by the development of individuality and uniqueness, by personality and soul, by rising to a high, preordained historic purpose. According to the inextrable laws of nature that determine both physical welfare and community configuration, Isra 1 shoul have remained a slave people. Yet G-d intruded into the scene, bypassed Nature, and took us out UMAH MITOKH UMAH, to meet our destiny as the AM HANIVCHAR at Mt. Sinai. Yetziat Mitzrayimis thus the triumph of History over Nature.
- 5. CHAMETZ AND MATZAH reflect the same theme. The Jews in Egypt were sitting down to their meal - - eating is the most natural of natural expressions. They were indulging their natural appetites. But History called at that moment: yestiat Mitzrayim. Which takes preceduce? The answer: History. Isræl had to leave BECHIPAZON, immediately, responding to the historical challenge, and at the expense of a good meal. Let the dough NOT rise - - history was beckoning. And so: no chametz, only matzah.
- 6. Similarly: PESACH, the passing over of the Jewish and the striking at the Egyptian homes represents a violation or bypassing of the natural order and acting in the historic order. A plague does not discriminate, an angel does. Thedemands of history outweighed those of orderly natural processes.
- 7. And this very same theme is recapitulated in the law of BEKHORIM. The child to be redeemed is a product of Nature. Interestingly, the mother-child relationship is strictly a natural one, it bespeaks a deep, intimate, biological relationship. The father-child relationship, on the other hand, is more distant, less natural, more abstract, less evdient. Fatjer represents not a natural relationship, but one of authority or ultimate origins - - and hence is more spiritual in net quality. (Thus:avinu she'bashamayim). The child to be redeemed is one who s most clearly a child of Nature: PETER RECHEM, not a BEKHOR L'AVIV. This naturalness is emphasized again by the equation to animal firstlings: BAADAM UVABEHEMAH. Yet the Father, representing the more-thannatural, is the one who redeems the child from his bonds to nature, her eleases him from the shackles of TEVA, and responds to the command KADESH LI, sanctify by sublimating and transcending the natural, by overcoming inital limutations, by reaching beyond the environment and purely natural milieu. From a PETER RECHEM, equivalent to BEHEMAH, KAD SH LI - - by the father's redeemijg act.
- 8. The KOHEN's question MAH BAIT TEFEI, which do you prefer: the koney or the child, is one directed to every parent, every one responsible for a future soul, in a direct way: what standard do you propose to raise this child by? The natural, the one in which

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29 Oakland St. Springfield 8, Mass. you accept the limitations imposed gy Nature and Society, so that the child will live by a standard of CHAMISHA SELAIM, as does everyone else, or a standard which will help him rise above his initial shackles, which will make him truly BINKHA - your son, in the sense of AL TIKRI BANAYIKH ELA BONAYIKH - - one who will be a builder, a creative link in the chain of TRA ition, one who will inherit and pass on to generations following all the ideals you cherish, the Torah you hold sacred, who will rise, above the impersonalities of Nature, to the uniqueness of his Jewish historic destiny?

9. Your answer was recited in clear and crisp words: I prefer BENI - - that he be more than a man of CHAMISHAH SELAIM, more than a conformist to natrue and society, but that he rise to fufill his destiny as a builder-son... KADESH LI....