

"DEAR FELLOW RACISTS..."

My dear fellow racists -- for that is what the "international community" has said we are -- where do we go from here?

Now that Soviet Russia has questioned Israel's civil liberties, and Saudi Arabia has challenged its absence of tolerance for minorities, and Uganda has denounced its want of humaneness, and Libya has censured it for the malpractice of social justice, and Sudan has convicted it of discrimination against darker races -- what now?

I admit that my first reaction to the U.N. vote defining Zionism as a form of racism and racial discrimination was one of anger and fear, genuine gloom. But upon second thought, while the anger is certainly still there, I have much less apprehension and depression. I can even discern some positive results internally.

Consider the adventures of the first Israel, that is, our Father Jacob. We read of him that when he left Beersheba, that *וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיֵּן שָׁם*, that he alighted upon the place, and he slept there because the sun had set. The Talmud (in *Berakhot*) maintains that the expression *וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם* implies that Jacob prayed to God:

וַיִּקְרַב תִּיקֹן תַּפִּלַּת עֲרֵבִית... וְאֵין פְּגִיעָה אֵלָּא תַּפִּלָּה...

Jacob was the one who established the third prayer of the day, that of Maariv. The great Gerer Rebbe, the author of "*חידושי הר"ם*", interprets this as implying that Jacob taught all his descendants how to retain hope in the very darkness of the night, how in the most somber and gloomy and the blackest of circumstances, a Jew can and ought achieve a sense of security through prayer.

That insight is most valuable. I would even add that this explains why the prayer of Maariv is halakhically different from the other two prayers, that of Shacharit and Minhah, in that the latter two are considered *חובה* (obligatory), whereas *תַּפִּלַּת עֲרֵבִית רְשׁוּת*, the Maariv service is considered voluntary -- in the sense that one may dispense with the prayer if another occasion of *mitzvah* presented itself at the same time.

Normally, it is taken that Maariv is therefore less important than the other two prayers. But I believe that the contrary is true: Maariv is more precious, more difficult, and more demanding, for it is a far greater challenge to hold your own, to keep the faith, even when the sun has set, when it is dark all about, when you are beset by danger, when you are fleeing an Esau and preparing for a Laban, alone and hungry and frightened. It is for this reason that *תַּפִּלַּת עֲרֵבִית רְשׁוּת*, that this prayer is considered voluntary rather than obligatory. One cannot legislate heroism as obligatory. It is, rather, a privilege to be able to know of the coming dawn when the sun has begun to set.

So, let us follow our Father Jacob, and let us prayerfully know and understand, that the darkness will yet end, and we, descendants of Jacob-Israel, shall be safe and secure and strong. In the sudden night that has descended upon us, we shall recite a prayer, light a candle, and anticipate the rising sun.

These second thoughts concerning the United Nations vote are more than a prayer. November 10, 1975, will forever remain as the *yahrzeit* of a great and

infamous disaster for the United Nations; but paradoxically, it may yet prove a blessed goad for Jews throughout the world.

I see a series of consequences that this travesty and infamy can and ought and, if we are wise and persevere, will lead to.

First, I believe it will bring straggling Jews back to Zionism. No longer will Israelis smugly use the word "ציונות" as a synonym for empty pedantry, a joke, as implying a windbag, "hot air." Zionism will, as a result of the United Nations vote, assume a new dignity amongst us.

For us in the Diaspora, it will shake us out of our lethargic and comfortable illusion that 1948 was the fulfillment of the Zionist vision, and that it is no longer necessary. Consider this: a whole world does not gang up on an idea or a movement that is superfluous, ineffective, or passé!

I admit my guilt in sharing this narrow perception. I think I have now learned something from the Arab, Communist, and Third World countries.

Now is the time for every good Jew to identify as a Zionist, and to join a Zionist organization. I am a Mizrachi, even if I have not always been a very active one in the past. But whether it is Mizrachi or ZOA or some Revisionist group, it is incumbent upon us to join -- officially and at once!

Second, now is the time for all good Jews, including Zionists, to come back to Judaism.

There are those of us who were impelled by prophetic visions of a united humanity, and who proved naive and careless when we saw in the U.N. exactly thirty years ago the realization of the Messianic visions of Isaiah and Amos. We allowed our enthusiasm, and our penchant for wish-fulfillment, to lead us into a secular trap: as if the brotherhood of man is at all possible without the fatherhood of God. It is simply untrue! Peace and justice and righteousness -- the great prophetic ideals -- are not realizeable without the Creator of the world. Without God, united nations can well become an international band of gangsters. Secular Messianism is a universal hazard.

If an individual, or even a city or a state, defaults, then the nation can appoint judges as receivers. But if the whole world goes bankrupt, who will redeem or receive or even speak for it?! If there is no God, we are finished.

This means that now, hopefully, this globally sanctioned anti-Semitism will knock some sense into the empty heads of the Jewish youngsters of the New Left, who parade as Trotzkyites and Maoists and followers of Che, and all other such radical fads.

It will remind all Jews of their true priorities: אם אין ארץ ישראל -- If we are not for ourselves, no one else will be.

Perhaps more important, it will remind Zionists that Zionism has meaning only in the context of Judaism; that socialism did not and will not save us; that eliminating the Name of God from the Israeli Declaration of Independance has not made us and will not make us more acceptable as a modern national liberation movement; that secular nationalism alone can only convert the State of Israel into another Third World type (and the Third World, we now know, consists largely of international political prostitutes willing to trade their principles for petrodollars); that נחיה ככל הגוים בית ישראל ("Let us be like unto all the nations, O House of Israel") is a slogan of defeatism and degradation.

In 1948, and the years leading up to it, Zionist leaders in the U.N. established the claim of Jews to Palestine on the basis of the Bible, the promise by God of the Holy Land to the descendants of Abraham. Later, representatives of the sovereign State of Israel quietly forgot about the Bible, and spoke rather in terms of rights of possession. Instead of Judaism, they pointed to military prowess and scientific achievement. Israeli Independence Day was celebrated not by an expression of gratitude to God and by a display of Jewish and worldly culture that had flowered in Zion, but by military parades and the flexing of muscles. Too many Israeli leaders acted as if deference to Judaism was an unfortunate political necessity because of domestic partisan pressures. Now that the U.N. has decreed that Zionism is a form of racism, we know that this attack is directed specifically against the linkage between the Bible and the State of Israel, against the juncture of Judaism and Zionism. We must therefore reaffirm the Biblical basis of our national existence, and confirm the connection between Judaism and Zionism. This is, indeed, the meaning of Ambassador Chayyim Herzog's insistence, so universally accepted, that the "Zionism is a form of racism" resolution of the U.N. is a species of global anti-Semitism.

Third, a consequence of this vote is that it must move all Jews, Right or Left, religious or non-religious, to a new sense of unity. Now is not the time for the leisure of internecine conflict and struggle.

It is in this sense that two groups are deserving public criticism and censure. First is the Agudah, whose entire delegation walked out of the Knesset when the Knesset voted to condemn the United Nations for their "Zionism is a form of racism" travesty. One must be fair to the Agudah. The Agudah felt uncomfortable having to defend Zionism, when the very reason for its existence as a group is anti-Zionism. It is also true that they have excoriated the U.N. resolution and condemned it as blatant anti-Semitism. Yet, a minimum of national pride and self-dignity should have lead them to stay in the Knesset, and vote for the resolution condemning the United Nations. As it is, the Agudah walked out and left the Communists to vote "Nay." It was not a proud day for Agudath Israel.

Even more criticism and censure ought be directed against those on the other end of the spectrum, the extreme secularists who found no better time than these tense and difficult months to raise the issue of civil marriage and who -- as Member of Knesset Marsha Friedman, did in a recent article in Maariv -- escalated their rhetoric irresponsibly, accusing the Halakhah of bigotry because it establishes certain criteria and prerequisites for marriage, and charging the State of Israel with racism because it accepts rabbinic legislation on marriage and personal status! It is hard to see much of a difference between this loose talk and the U.N. rhetoric which has so dismayed us.

Fourth, a consequence of this vote is a challenge to us to be more realistic and more effective politically.

I, for one, have become less and less enchanted by our Secretary of State. I am outraged by the difference between his temper tantrums against the Israelis after last March, and the gentle tap on the knuckles which he gave to the Arabs and Third World countries in this anti-Semitic vote. As a Jew and as an American, I am much prouder of Ambassador Moynihan than of his Jewish chief in Foggy Bottom.

Also, this must lead us to action. American Jews must have a long memory. We must punish those who betrayed us. Businessmen must become more wary of dealing with Brazil, which has a blatantly anti-Semitic government. American tourists must keep away from those countries which are the usual tourist sites, and which voted for the resolution, and must notify the consulates of those

countries why we are cancelling out on vacations -- in such places as Greece (which used to be called the "cradle of democracy" and is becoming more and more its graveyard); Mexico; and even Jamaica. It is true that Jamaica only abstained from the vote; therefore we must not punish her over much, but merely abstain from tourism to that country...

Finally, and above all -- we have one major, powerful answer to the United Nations. It is a difficult but the most effective response.

The United Nations has accused Israel of racism and has offered the P.L.O. participation in all dealings of the organization. Their argument is that Jews have unjustly displaced the Palestinian Arabs; that all the State of Israel -- belongs to the Arabs.

All of this is an echo of an ancient manoeuvre. We read in today's Sidra:

וַיִּשְׁמַע אֶת דְּבַר בְּנֵי לָבָן לֵאמֹר נָקָה יַעֲקֹב אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר לָאֲבִי
וַיֵּצֵא אֶת לָבָן עֵשָׂה אֶת כָּל הַכְּבוֹד הַזֶּה

"And he (Jacob) heard the words of Laban's sons, saying: Jacob hath taken away all that was our father's; and of that which was our father's hath he gotten all this wealth."

So, Laban has changed his policy! When Jacob came as a penniless and harmless refugee -- and when, much later, Jews straggled out of the D.P. camps following the Holocaust -- the world, Laban, was moved by an elemental animal pity for us. But -- no more! The world does not begrudge the Jew any success.

וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶת פְּנֵי לָבָן וְהָיָה אֵלָיו עֵצָה כְּתִמּוֹל שְׁשׂוּם

"And Jacob beheld the countenance of Laban, and, behold, it was not toward him as beforetime."

So, what shall we do? - leave all in Laban's hands? - pick up and run? - abandon the Jewish claim into the Land of Israel? - ignore Zionist visions and abandon its labors?

הֵם וְשָׁמַיִם, Heaven Forbid!

Instead: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל יַעֲקֹב שׁוּב אֶל אֶרֶץ אֲבוֹתֶיךָ וְלִמְוֹלָדֶתְךָ
וְאֶהְיֶה עִמָּךְ

"And the Lord said unto Jacob: Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee."

The answer we must give to the Labans, then and now, is our affirmative response to the Divine command: more American Aliyah! "Return unto the land of thy fathers."

If there is anyone who is playing with the idea of Aliyah, let this session of the United Nations make up your mind for you! Now Aliyah is the answer to Laban, the answer to the U.N. Now is the time to hear the divine call:

"Return to the land of your ancestors."

Now Aliyah is more needed than ever before. It is the most heroic and dignified answer to the travesty of November 10th. Aliyah has always meant the performance of a great mitzvah and the strengthening and encouragement of the State of Israel. Now, it is also an act of heroic resistance to those international muggers who have so brazenly accused us of racism.

If you are upset by the chutzpah of an India faulting Israel for a lack

of justice and democracy - "Return to the land of thy fathers."

If you are scandalized by the genocidal Pakistanis or Nigerians lecturing us and moralizing to Israel - "Return to the land of thy fathers."

If you are indignant at the unctuous hypocrisy of Kuwaitis and Saudis, of Lebanese and Egyptians -- "Return to the land of thy fathers."

For, as the Rabbis (B.R.) interpreted this divine message:

אב'ך מצפה לך, אמך מצפה לך,
אני בעצמי מצפה לך --

"Your father is waiting for you; your mother is waiting for you; and I too am waiting for you."