

"NEITHER THY HONEY NOR THY STING"

This week, in the course of a brief tour to the Pacific Northwest, I had the opportunity to meet Jewish college youth in several universities. I always find this experience worthwhile, and even exhilarating. The same was true for the young people I met during this trip.

But this was the first time that I personally encountered the pure genus of Jewish New Left, West Coast variety. I am sorry to report that it left me less than happy -- even repelled. I saw genuine moral fervor, that I like to think is Jewish in origin, expressed in sterile anger, in childishness and irrationality, combined with a dogmatism and self-certainty worthy of the ugliest totalitarian. I do not mean that all or most or even many Jewish students belong to the New Left. They are the most wonderful human and Jewish raw material. But the few who are radicals of this variety are too many. They too represent a great resource of good raw material, but they are very raw indeed, and can prove dangerous until they finally mature.

One young man, who I am told is typical of this type of student -- and, even more so, junior faculty members especially in sociology and the humanities -- asked me if I thought Israel was always right. I answered that, of course, I did not think so, and the whole literature of the Prophets proves the point. In that case, he challenged me, would I join him in publicly condemning Israel for

its position on Vietnam. His major concern was that Israel had taken the wrong position on Vietnam in that it does not associate itself with Ho Chi Minh and the North Vietnamese and Vietcong. I explained to him that the Vietnamese situation was not quite that simple, that one could not build his whole moral life about a clear decision on this complicated an issue, and that anyway Israel would find it impossible to advocate Vietcong terrorism, such as throwing bombs in crowded movie theatres, because it would then be tantamount to an invitation to Arab terrorists to do likewise. It therefore was a matter of sheer survival for Israel not to support the Vietcong. To which the young and omniscient sage responded that that was precisely what was wrong with Israel, that it was hypocritical for it to deny support for the Vietcong because of concern for its own survival . . .

Here then was an intelligent -- or, at least, educated -- young Jew ready to battle for any cause, save his own. The Jewish New Left is willing to give its all for Vietnam or Biafra or the Blacks or the poor, but not for Israel, not for Jews in Arab countries, not for Jews in Poland or Russia.

Such self-sacrifice, although it attains a moral expression, is fundamentally sick. It is infected with the virus of self-hatred, or at least self-abnegation.

In our Sidra of this morning, God tells the Israelites to sprinkle blood on their doorposts in order that they be spared. They are told: חֵלְכֶם בַּדָּם בְּצִדְיָם , "the blood shall be a sign for

you," so that *וְרָאִיתִי אֶת הַדָּם* , "when I see the blood I shall pass over you." The Rabbis of the Mekhilta interpret those verses strictly: it shall be "a sign for you," *כֹּתֶנְךָ* "for you" -- and not for others. Similarly, *וְרָאִיתִי אֶת הַדָּם* , "and I shall see the blood," *וְרָאִיתִי אֶת הַדָּם* , the blood must be seen by Me and not by others.

What does this mean? A contemporary Rabbi (*ר' אברהם אביהו*) has identified the blood that is sprinkled as a symbol of courage and self-sacrifice. For the Israelites in Egypt to slaughter a lamb for the Passover sacrifice was the height of bravery, for the lamb was regarded as a god by the Egyptians. What the Mekhilta is saying, therefore, is that the blood of the lamb must be sprinkled on the inside of the doorpost and not on the outside, that it must be seen only by God and not by outsiders, for it is a symbol only for the Israelites and not for strangers. In other words, the courage of our convictions and our self-sacrifice and our willingness to do battle unto death must be expressed for causes that are Godly and that are Jewish, and we must not spend ourselves and exhaust all our energies in offering ourselves up as sacrifices on strange altars.

Despite the apparent selfishness of this interpretation, there is a good deal of hard common sense to it. The woman who neglects her own children to the point of endangering them in order to volunteer for social service work; the man who gives charity generously to strangers but is unspeakably cruel to his own flesh and blood;

and Jews who work for any cause but their own -- all have one thing in common: their service, though it appears and may be noble, is more psychologically than morally motivated.

There is something wrong in the adult world of American Jewry if this is the result. Apparently, we have trained our young to be more concerned with everyone but ourselves, to be free in giving of their compassion and help to every cause but the Jewish cause.

Does this mean that we should not offer our help to others? Do I mean to imply that we ought to withhold our service and sacrifice for the causes of non-Jews?

No, absolutely not. It is part of the mission of being Jewish to offer our assistance for others. When, at Sinai, we were told that we were chosen as the people of God, the Torah adds the words, as if in explanation, *וְכָל הָאָרֶץ לִּי*, "For all the earth is Mine." What does this mean? A great Jewish commentator (Seforno) takes this to mean that God loves all of mankind, every nation and every race is precious to God, and therefore He does not want them to continue without His will being known to them. Therefore, He selected the people of Israel to be the priest-teachers to the world, to offer themselves up, willingly or not|willingly, to bring the Divine message to all of mankind, for all of mankind is dear to God. This commission assigned to Israel includes not only teaching, but help and contribution and work and sacrifice for any just cause of any children of God.

However, this service must not be <sup>זכר הדם</sup> <sup>הזכרון</sup> <sup>הזכרון</sup>, blood that can be seen only by others. The paschal blood was on the inside, but it was on the inside of the doorpost, which is meant for going-out as well as for coming-in. The capacity for moral courage and self-sacrifice must always issue from the "inside" of Jewish commitment, from <sup>זכר הדם</sup> <sup>הזכרון</sup> <sup>הזכרון</sup>, but it must be expressed as well in giving out to others, in bringing moral passion from within the sanctuary of Judaism to those without who need help and succor. We must work for others, but as Jews; it must be an expression of <sup>זכר הדם</sup> <sup>הזכרון</sup> <sup>הזכרון</sup>, of a sacrifice for the Almighty.

I do not regret for one moment all the help that our community, both as organizations and as individuals, has given to the Blacks in the civil rights movement. But I am sad that we usually have done so as expressing general and vague sentiments, in a secular-humanistic fashion, and that we failed to do so as Jews, as human beings who bear a splended and ancient heritage which commands us to help and to serve and to enhance the cause of justice throughout the world.

I deeply regret that in the past those who were immersed in Judaism have largely failed to reach outward to other peoples, and those Jews who have reached outwards have usually had no real link with Judaism. As a result, for many people Civil Rights became a religion in itself. The help to the Black community became a

substitute for Judaism, when it should have been an expression and function of Judaism. As פדיון הנאכלים, as a gesture of brotherliness to the deprived and the oppressed throughout the world which comes from a heightened Jewish consciousness, our service would have been healthy and normal; but as פדיון הנאכלים לאחריים, as a generalized sentiment totally devoid of Judaism, it has become sick and self-hating and morbid -- such as the justification of Vietcong who kill civilians, and hence, logically, of Arab terrorists. It has motivated such Jews to neglect Jewish causes that are equally compelling, and it has led some of the young Jewish members of the New Left to vindicate Blacks even when they are מבטלים רצח יהודים, when they reward past service of the Jewish community for the Black community with evil and hatred and resentment.

Indeed, these spoiled and over-indulged New Left children of over-materialistic Jewish homes, where Jewish standards were subverted in the passion for status and wealth and convenience, these children failed to react when in return for Jews participating in civil rights marches with yarmulkes on their heads, and Jews willing to die, and dying, for Black civil rights in Mississippi, we received in return a generous helping of anti-Semitic literary rubbish such as the poem read over radio last week:

Hey you Jew with the yarmulka on your head,  
You pale-faced Jew-boy, I wish you were dead.

This is the non-reaction of those who were trained in פדיון הנאכלים לאחריים, in offering their blood for every cause but that which is Jewish.

This brings us to an even more urgent problem. What ought be our reaction to the events of recent months that have so exercised our community?

We might, of course, have expected some acknowledgement from the Blacks and their friends. At least, we might have received some encouragement and help for the State of Israel, instead of an alliance between the American Blacks and the Arabs overseas.

Yet, I think we should be willing to forego any acknowledgement and any thanks. When the Prophet Balaam wanted to curse Israel, he asked God for permission and was refused. He persisted and again was refused. Then, by virtue of a certain kind of imponderable perversity, Balaam asked permission of God to bless the Jews. This time God said to him: No, thanks, they don't need your blessing, they are blessed without you. And the Midrash adds the words: אוגרין וזאבין, as one says to a wasp or hornet, לא נן זאבין ונן אוגרין, "neither thy honey nor thy sting."

We should not really expect the honey of gratitude from the Black community. We ought to be sufficiently realistic after 3500 years of history in the world to expect that. Furthermore, if the Blacks, in their hard struggle for identity and a respectable image, feel that gratitude to anyone else presents an unbearable burden, that they regard it as patronizing and infantilizing, we must respect their wishes. At any rate, Jews who helped the Negro community never did so because they anticipated reward or wanted compensation, even



the compensation of gratitude. So we do not want any honey.

But -- *ג'ב'ק'ח נ' כ'ח*, we reject the sting too. We cannot accept racist anti-Semitism whether it is Black or White. We have, in the course of our long story, been exposed to a very rich variety of anti-Semitism. We know that it can come in all sizes and shapes and colors -- and we like none of it no matter what its form. We cannot countenance anti-Semitism whether in the schools or on radio or in the museums. And Black anti-Semitism is not something that is merely the vulgar expression of the untutored masses. The Afro-American Teachers Association is supposedly composed of educated people, not those culturally deprived. If they are deprived, it is only of courtesy and understanding and the ability to learn from history and the awareness not to confound friend and foe -- deprivations compensated for by a benevolent Deity in an over-abundance of "chutzpah."

Our greatest disappointment of all is the silence of Black moderates -- and white Christian moderates. Our disappointment is in the silence of school officials and city officials, of people in the communications industry, such as radio and TV, and in publishing -- some of them Jews! To all of them, of all colors, whether extremists or moderates, we say: Don't give us credit, but don't countenance hatred for Jews. *ג'ב'ק'ח נ' כ'ח ג'ע'ב'ק'ח נ' כ'ח*, neither thy honey nor thy sting.



There are some moderates, perhaps even including highly-placed Jews, who suffer from more than a touch of masochism, who dismiss the reaction of the Jewish community to the latest events as constituting a hyper-sensitivity to anti-Semitism. Well then, let us admit that we are hyper-sensitive. Of course we are -- because we have been hyper-persecuted and hyper-killed. We know too much about anti-Semitism to become indifferent to it at this stage of our history.

Furthermore, the attempt to dismiss Black anti-Semitism as merely the result of socio-economic factors, as the unfortunate result of the collision of Black revolutionaries and the White power structure, would be disingenuous if it were not hypocritical and stupid. Anti-Semites throughout all the ages have used the socio-economic or political argument to good advantage. Pharaoh was afraid that Jews are becoming too numerous and pushing Egyptians out of choice jobs. Haman saw us as too different from others, and therefore politically unassimilable. The Church and Chmielnitzki and Hitler and Stalin -- all of them had good socio-economic reasons to hurt the Jew, and they hurt us. So when the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art justifies -- as he did in the first of his two reactions to the uproar -- the poisonous scribblings of a high-school senior by saying that if it is a fact, and it is a fact, that Blacks are thwarted in their attempts to rise socially and economically because Jews

hold those positions, then "so be it," he reveals himself as manifestly unqualified to hold his post. He apparently does not understand that to explain anti-Semitism is not to excuse it.

We should therefore remind Mr. Hoving that we cannot accept his very disturbing first reaction to the events, a reaction not completely covered by his second statement which was in the form of a retraction.

We must say to Mr. Hoving: anti-Semitism is not a "happening," it is a horror -- the kind of horror that we are determined to prevent from re-occurring in our lifetime.

So we don't expect thanks for the help that the Jewish community has given to others. But neither do we want a knife in the back because of the alleged vices of some individual Jews. An individual Jew who overcharges is no more justification for anti-Semitism than a Negro hoodlum who steals justifies anti-Black racism.

ג'ב'ר'ח מן לב' ג'ע'ר'ז מן לב'.

The Jewish contributions to right and just causes were offered because we believed in the cause, not as a smart political ploy. They were never conditioned, in the first place, on reciprocal assistance that we expected as a result. We shall therefore continue to help the disadvantaged, the impoverished, and the oppressed throughout the world.

But, the following four points must be kept in mind.

First, what we do for others must be done as Jews committed

to their ancestral faith, and our whole moral impulse must arise out of our Jewish heritage: *בְּיָדֵינוּ הַחַיִּים*.

Second, we must offer the assistance only where it is accepted, and not where it is rejected. If the Black community now does not want our help, if they reject our assistance because we are White Liberals, if they feel they want to rise on their own, they are entitled to do so. Let us withdraw our help, if that is their wish, and let us do so without resentment or animosity or rancor. Let us not impose our favors on others, as some Jewish organizations seem intent upon doing. Besides, there are many good Jewish causes that will be willing to accept that help.

Third, we must expect no gratitude for whatever we give to others. We must not expect it, and we must certainly not ask for it -- *אֵין חַסְדִּים לְעָלֵינוּ*, we should want no honey.

But fourth, we must never remain indifferent to anti-Semitism -- *אֵין חַסְדִּים לְעָלֵינוּ*, we want no sting.

Those firmly within the Jewish community and the Jewish commitment must not allow the recent events to confirm them in their desire for separateness, in closing themselves off against the entire world, in refusing to engage the world in its larger dimensions. On the contrary, we must resolve to continue traditional Jewish service for all people and for all just causes.

Those Jews of moral inclinations who are presently outside the Jewish framework, should be invited to join the rest of us

in expressing our ethical instincts as Jews -- and to do so in balanced and rational ways, without neglecting Jewish causes, to do so with love for others and certainly without hatred for ourselves.

And to those who are non-Jews and who have shown signs of enmity towards us, especially the Black community, we say: Let us de-escalate and de-fuse the situation before it is too late. Let us meet together and talk honestly and forthrightly and devise some way of avoiding a head-on collision, and even, possibly, reverting to the old alliance which benefited both of us and our entire country. In the words of the last President of this country, let us "reason together," and in the words of the present President, let us "not shout at each other." There is too much at stake for us to indulge ourselves with the leisure of emotion and anger.

We want no honey. And we want no sting. We want to live with others not as with bees or wasps or hornets or spiders. We aspire to that kind of association which does not require of us to speak to each other as one does in a bee-hive or in a wasp-nest or in a spider-web. We would rather live with each other as human beings, as all of us brothers by virtue of our One Father -- in the words of a Jewish Prophet, *הלא כלנו בן אחד*, "Have we not all One Father?"

The goal of all of us must be to live so that each recognizes in every other human being the *צלקת פנים*, the Image of God.