



Beth Am Commentator

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JANUARY 28, 1972



These earnest young people are all representatives of Beth Am. They are singing in front of the Dade County Court House during Chanukah. The group, directed by Harriet Potlock (far left), consists of our Beth Americans, special singing group, plus the Troubadours, a teenage teaching group (seen in striped pants). The Troubadours also have sung on television. Our young people earned \$150 for these appearances. The check was given to their new teenage building which we hope to build.

Photo courtesy of The Miami News.

Exciting Youth Activities Planned For Coming Months

The Beth Am Federation of Temple Youth (BAFTY) is planning many enjoyable programs for the remainder of the school year. This group, led by President Michael Bittel, participates in a variety of special interest programs, service projects, and has played an important role in our new teenage building drive.

Their plans for the months ahead include:

- February 25 A Congregational Sabbath Service and Oneg Shabbat.
- March 5 A Roaring Twenties Dance.
- March 19 A Rumor Clinic Program.
- April 2 A Passover Seder Program.
- April 8-9 Conclave in Tampa.
- April 16 Regressive Dinner and Elections.
- May 6-7 Weekend Retreat.
- May 14 Hosts for Regional Presidents Conclave.
- May 28 End of Year Banquet.

If your teenager is not a member of our Youth Group, we want him to join with us for a program of fun and good friendship. Call the Temple office to receive meeting notices for all of our events.

Religious Services



Friday, January 28
8:30 p. m.

Rabbi Baumgard will speak

Is God Just An Idea For
Non-scientific Man?

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29
11:15 a. m.

TORAH SERVICE



FROM THE RABBI'S DESK

Part Two--The Mythic Material In Genesis

Several weeks ago, we spoke about the mythic sections of the first book of the Bible, and we indicated that a myth is something which is generally and universally true, even though it may never have occurred in a specific situation exactly as it is described. The Book of Genesis contains both mythic and historical material. That is to say, it attempts to reconstruct the origins and development of the Hebrew people, but it goes beyond this to attempt to demonstrate the purpose of creation and the role of man in the universe. It is in the latter area that the mythic material comes into play.

Those who are anti-Jewish or anti-Bible frequently attack the Bible as being full of wild and primitive notions. These critics are not able to discern the difference between the mythical and historical-ethical material. They will say, "The Bible says the world was created in six days. Since this contradicts the theory of evolution, the Bible is manifestly untrue." Now, the authors of the Bible may have been in error in saying that the world was created in six days, but it does not follow that all other sections of the Bible are consequently untrue. Scientists themselves have had to admit their frequent errors, but this does not make science totally unworthy, and the theory of evolution is no more than that, a theory (although I happen to subscribe to it).

A sympathetic student of the scripture assumes that the authors of the Bible were not scientists. Obviously, they were trying to write an ethically oriented history, a truly revolutionary procedure for their time. Apparently, it was important to them to note that the world was created in six days. Why? The question is not really, "Was the world created in six days?" For no one could possibly know that; the question is, "Why did the authors make this assertion?" The answer to this question becomes clear when we come to the Ten Commandments, and, specifically, to the commandment to observe the day of rest. In a time when kings forced their subjects to work constantly, when large land owners worked their slaves, adults and children, from dawn to dusk seven days a week, some authority was needed to support the idea that all living things (not merely free men, nor merely human beings, but slaves and beasts of burden also) were entitled to one day of rest. Where was one to get such authority? From the kings? They were not really interested in the common man. From the land owners? For them, the only important thing was profit. The authority had to come from some supra-human agency, more powerful even than kings. Seen in this light, the statement that even God, who did not need to rest, rested on the seventh day can only be viewed as an ingenious invention (see now Exodus, Ch. 20, verse 11). Against this tradition, not even kings and wealthy land owners dared revolt. Such an idea can only be compared to the doctrine of "natural law" or "inalienable rights" employed in early America as the guarantee for our constitution.

That the later Jews understood this matter, exactly as I have written it, is clear from the restatement of the Ten Commandments at a later time in Jewish history. In the Book of Deuteronomy, a later group of Biblical editors (probably around 600 BCE) excluded this reason as the support for the commandment concerning the Sabbath (see Dt. 5:12-15). The question then emerges, "Why did the more sophisticated Jews play down the idea that God created the world in six days?" The answer has two parts. In the first place, the institution of the Sabbath was now an integral part of Jewish life, and no Jewish king would dare oppose it. Further, as our fathers came to have deeper insights into the nature of God, they understood that "every day He renews the deeds of creation." This idea is part of the daily prayer service in the morning. The thought that God ever needed to rest was no longer acceptable in ancient Israel.

The second reason that our fathers abandoned the idea that God created the world in six days is that they had experienced slavery in Egypt, and the memory of that painful experience was called upon to inspire every Jew to maintain the Sabbath as a day "of remembering the deliverance." Uninterrupted labor could be inflicted only upon slaves, and the Jew, inevitable, because of his historical experience, identified with the victim rather than with the master. Accordingly, the support for the commandment concerning the Sabbath in Deuteronomy is: "And thou shalt remember that thou was a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord, thy God, brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore,

the Lord, thy God, commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day." So, the authority behind the day of rest (during when man sought his greater humanity) was not the God of pre-history, the God of creation, but the God in history, the God who liberated the Hebrews, the God who is concerned about man's inhumanity to man!

When one looks at the Bible, not with prejudice against fundamentalist religions, but with the objective eye of the student, one can only develop the greatest respect for those who wrote the Bible and for the people who lived it. Would that we could raise ourselves above the practices of our time as they raised themselves above the practices of their day! Would that we could demonstrate a similar courage and inventiveness.

Joan's Gems



By JOAN SCHWARTZMAN

How about this one! We congratulate Gertrude Freeman who just received her Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Miami in Art History. Gert (Mrs. Jack Freeman) has just completed eight years of study. . . . Betsy, daughter of A. Budd and Iris Cutler, a freshman at Emory University, was elected to represent her dorm in the Women's Residence Association. . . . Marcia, daughter of the Kermit Bernheimers, traveled through Europe recently while attending the University of the New World in Switzerland.

B'nai Mitzvah

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29
11:15 a.m.



Mark and Jeffrey, sons of
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Kravetz