

SHOULD AMERICAN JEWS SUPPORT
THE STATE OF ISRAEL?

An address presented by
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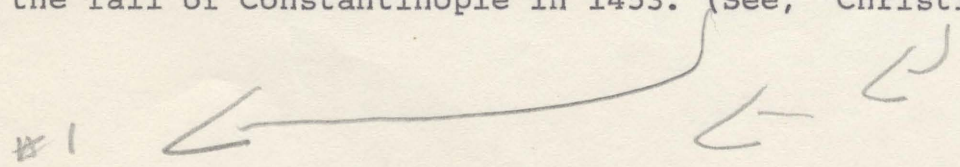
The recent Arab-Israelis crisis, short months ago, gave Jews throughout the world many heartaches, and then, fortunately, many opportunities for thanksgiving, and, then, as we relaxed, opportunities for humor. In the space of a few short days the attitude of Jews around the world changed from terror to pride, from tears to smiles. Even the normally austere "Times" magazine had an article on "chutpzpa-laced" jokes. The Israeli thrust through the Sinai desert was identified as a "Blintzkrieg". The invading Israeli regiment was nicknamed the "Bagel Lancers". It was said that Cassius Clay had changed his name from Mohammed Ali to Morris Steinberg. It was rumored that Jennie Grossinger had agreed to supervize the Bar Mitzvah parties at the Cairo-Hilton.

It is a thin line, indeed, from humor to tragedy. Who among us will ever forget our thoughts and phantasies as we read and heard of huge ^{endless} herds of Arabs, heavily armed, standing at battle-ready on the perimeter of tiny Israel. Who among us will ever forget the disbelief with which we faced the benevolent neutrality of France, England, the United States, and the United Nations. It was as if the condemned person had been marshalled before the firing squad and the commander of the squad had asked, "Who has a word to say in defense of the prisoner?" The question was asked, and no one, but no one, spoke up. Still the drums rolled, and the death of the condemned seemed imminent.

What happened thereafter is glorious history equal in drama and depth to anything that has ever happened in the Jewish saga. We don't want to forget the original Exodus, of course. We don't want to forget Haman and Esther, or Judah the Maccabee, but we don't need these stories any more to demonstrate the miraculous nature of the existence of the Jewish people. All we need is the tale of the six days in June, 1967. A tale so amazing that it still seems to be more legend than fact.

And what was the reaction of those who had remained silent while the drums rolled? The Rev. James L. Kelson, a former moderator of the United Presbyterian Church, writing in "Christianity Today", of July 21st, saw Israel as the sole culprit in the Middle East, and he labeled the Balfour Declaration as "the major cause of the three wars whereby the Jews have stolen so much of Palestine from the Arabs who have owned it for centuries". He called "this third Jewish war against the Arabs" perhaps the most serious setback to Christendom since the fall of Constantinople in 1453.* (See, "Christian Reactions

#1



to the Middle East Crisis", Bank, Am. Jew. Comm., 165 E. 56th Street, N. Y.).

The Rev. Henry P. Van Dusen, a past president of the Union Theological Seminary, ^{asserted} ~~assisted~~ in a letter dated June 26, to the New York Times, "All persons who seek to view the Middle East problem with honesty.....stand aghast at Israel's onslaught, the most violent, ruthless (and successful) aggression since Hitler's blitzkrieg across western Europe, aiming not at victory but at annihilation...". Fortunately, only some Christians reacted in this matter. Some of them warmly befriended us. The Rev. A. Roy Eckhardt, Chairman of the Department of Religion at Lehigh University, declared that the Rev. Van Dusen was guilty of an "unspeakable distortion of the facts...to call black white, to label as 'aggressors' the targets of aggression, and to identify as 'annihilationists' those who barely escaped being annihilated by a foe pledged to turning them into corpses, and who after their own victory, now manifest an almost incredible restraint and readiness to deal righteously with their would-be slayers". # 2

The Rev. Eckhardt continued, "...perhaps the only eventuality that would mutually satisfy Communist, Arab, and Christian detractors of Judaism, would be for Jews to consent to lie down and be slaughtered. At least this would fulfill one of the traditional yearnings of Christendom....." (~~See, #~~ "Christian Reactions to the Middle East Crisis", Bank, Am. Jew. Comm. 165 E. 56th Street, N. Y.).

Dr. Eckhardt was one of the few clergymen who came out strongly in behalf of Israel, ^{most} clergymen maintained a discreet and polite silence, ^{some of them were silent} except with respect to the city of Jerusalem. While they had quietly acquiesced when the Christian Holy places were controlled by Hussein, ^{some clergymen} many of them now began to call for the internationalization of the Holy City and its removal from Israeli control.

Since some Jews cross the line into Unitarianism thinking that it is sublimely non-sectarian, it might be worthwhile for us to hear what the Director of the Unitarian United Nations office had to say. With detached and pure objectivity the Rev. Dana E. Klotzle condemned, "...unequivocally

2 - *ibid, Am Jew Comm article.*

the apparent expansionist policy of the present Israeli government " He also accused Israel of excessive nationalism and of a naked power policy. Of course, Dr. Klotzle recommended the internationalization of the new and the old parts of Jerusalem, and he called upon "both Jew and Arab alike to rise above the narrow confines of nationalism...." (See, "~~Christian Reactions to the Middle East Crisis~~", Bank, Am. Jew. Comm., 165 E. 56th St., N.Y.). # 3

While many non-Jews were uttering such pious advice and offering unsolicited lessons in ethics to the descendants of Moses, the Arabs went about their own way *boldly* re-arming for the next phase of the war. The Soviets openly allied themselves with the Arabs in a purposeful show of military might. One thing was certain. The Arabs and the Soviets were neither silent nor neutral. They were very decisive in the steps they took and are taking.

The French have a proverb, "The more things change, the more they remain the same". The shooting of the condemned prisoner did not take place last June, but the plot to shoot him remains unchanged, and those who watched last time, seem more or less content to watch again. These realities ought to mean something very important to you and to me.

sub-head

The Ignorance of American Jew

One of the things which stands out in my mind following the six day war is some T.V. interviews with outstanding Arabs in various countries of the Arab bloc. Especially can't I forget the Professor at the American University in Lebanon who patronizingly spoke of the presumption of the Jews in wanting to establish a nation in Arab territory. Unfortunately, his arrogance, which is ~~somewhat~~ *many* typical of the Arab intellectuals, is matched by the ignorance of American Jews, as to the developments in Palestine and the surrounding territories in recent and past history.

We American Jews are apt to forget that from the end of Jewish sovereignty by Roman conquest in 70 A.D., until 1948, the inhabitants of Palestine had never sought an independent status. In 13 centuries, Palestine changed hands 14 times, but even the conquerors never settled in this country of sand and stones.

In 1888, there were 25,000 Jews in Palestine. ¹⁵³ In 1914, 100,000 Jews. *In 1936, 400,000 #4*

3 - *ibid, AJC article*
 # 4 # "Israel and American Jewry - 1967 and Beyond", publ. *through American Hebrew Cooperation* 1967

Palestine is evidence of continuous Jewish involvement in the land of their fathers.

Since the Jews first claimed Canaan under Joshua, Palestine has never been a national home for any other people! It hasn't even been described as a separate geographical entity. Each conqueror absorbed it unto his own empire and ruled it, from without, as an occupied territory. "To the Turks, it was a remote province of the Ottoman empire; to the Arabs, it was a small segment annexed to a great Arabic empire. Only for Jews has it always remained the place of liberation and independence, (See "Israel and American Jewry - 1967 and Beyond, published Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 14, Rabbi Dr. Max Nussbaum). the ^{very} center of our aspirations, the center of our creativity and hope as a people." #45

The notion that the modern Israelis are merely intruders into a long established group of Arab nations is also false. Egypt, itself, did not become an independent state until after World War I, by mandate of the allied powers. This is also true of Jordan and Syria. The original Balfour Declaration, issued by Great Britian which was given mandate powers over this region by the League of Nations, promised the Jews all of historic Palestine including both sides of the river Jordan, a territory of 45,000 square miles.

In 1921, when Transjordan was created, four-fifths of the territory promised to the Jews by the Balfour Declaration was given instead to Transjordan. Little by little, the 45,000 square miles originally assigned to the Jews dwindled to 8,000 square miles. The Arabs, thus, find themselves in the position of having been awarded 12 independent states after two world wars, and they ^{unable to} cannot tolerate ^{a tiny non-ARAB state in their midst} the loss of a tiny corner of the Middle East. Their claim that Palestine was always Arab is, on its face, unhistorical.

Arab Refugees

Nor need we Jews feel so defensive in the matter of the Arab refugees, which is, or course, a serious human problem in which we are obligated to help. The fact that the invading Arab armies in the first Arab-Israeli war asked the Arab masses to leave the cities so that fighting could proceed unrestricted is documented over and over again. (See, "Christian Reactions to the Middle East Crisis", Bank, Am. Jew. Comm. 165 E. 56th Street, N.Y. p. 39ff).

#4 ibid, UNITE Sunday, Dr. Max Nussbaum

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Nasser has been quoted as saying, "if the Arabs return to Israel, Israel will cease to exist." ^{#2} Other Arab leaders have stated that the ~~return of the~~ ~~refugees~~ they regard the refugees as an advance army.

"The day is short... the workers are few...
and the Master of the House is urgent..." (Talmud)

~~#6~~ (Note: The Arab League, the Palestine Arab Higher Committee, Arab municipal authorities, legal commanders and Arab Governments all had a hand in promoting and encouraging the exodus. Their pronouncements reflected a deliberate policy of mass evacuation, and, writing as recently as 25 April 1966, the Arab scholar, Walid Khaliki, bears this out in his column, "Why Did We Leave?", *in the newspaper,* "

"It is normal in all countries in time of war to evacuate women and children from endangered zones, particularly if the enemy's land forces are near at hand."

On 12 October 1963, the Cairo daily, "Akhbar el-Yom," recorded: "15 May 1948 arrived...and the last British soldier left Palestine. On that very day the Mufti (of Jerusalem) appealed to the Arabs of Palestine to leave the country, to leave Haifa and Jaffa and other cities...because ~~of~~ the Arab armies were about to enter and fight in their stead against the Jewish gangs and oust them from Palestine."

The Jordan daily, "Falastin," wrote on 19 February 1949, "The Arab States, which had encouraged the Palestine Arabs to leave their homes temporarily in order to be out of the way of the Arab invasion armies, have failed to keep their promises to help these refugees." #6

What the Arabs are protesting is that the Israelis are reluctant to take a large mass of people sworn to the destruction of Israel back into their midst. I repeat, the Arab refugees are ^{deserving} worthy of our help and compassion, but to blame Israel entirely or primarily for the victims of two wars begun by the Arabs is not consistent with the flow of events. You cannot initiate a war and, then, blame the attacked nation for all of the consequences of the war. insert (X)

In sum, we can deal with a free conscience, with the problem of giving help to our brethren in Israel. Before Hitler, and before Nasser, we may have had some doubts that the European Jews and the Israelis were bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, but we can hardly have those doubts now.

History has made it clear to us that to exist, a people, like an individual, must have a home base, a place to stand against the world. An ancient Greek thinker said, "Give me a place to

#6 op. cit, ASE article
 #7 Zuercher Woche, Switzerland, Sept. 1, 1961

stand, and I will be able to move the world". Without that place, the individual and the group is in flux and without any real strength, they are a perpetual guest, reliant upon the favors of others.

Let me conclude with a story from Hasidic lore which might help us to understand the importance of "a place to stand." There was a certain Hasidic Rabbi, a lover of nature, who used to go walking in the forest on regular intervals. Habitually, he would go to this specific place, unparalleled in beauty. There he would make a fire, he would sit down, meditate, and pray. Here he would commune with God in the deepest sense. Some say, he would experience God face to face.

A generation passed, and a disciple of this famous Rabbi would say to his own students, "I do not remember the prayer that my teacher prayed, but I still remember the place, and I know how to light the fire." So he would take his students to that place and build the fire so that they would bask in the inspiration of the ancient master.

Still another generation later, a student of the first disciple told his own students, "I do not know the prayer recited by the ancient master, nor do I remember how to light the fire, but I still remember the place", and he would take his students to the place that they might be inspired and get some of the feeling shared by the old master.

You and I, good friends, live in ^a the generation which has forgotten the prayer, and we have forgotten how to light the fire. Ineed, we ~~have~~ almost forgotten the place also, but we have ^{recently} been reminded of the locality of the place. Perhaps, if we do enough to preserve that place, we will once again learn how to light the fire. ~~Then, perhaps, to say the prayer, so that like the ancient hasid, we, too, will experience God-face to face.~~

If we learn again how to light the fire, we might even learn, in time, how to say the prayer, so that we may ^{ever} hope like