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The Cycle of Passover: Egypt comes to Norway, 1940.

THE CYCLE OF PASSOVER: EGYPT COMES TO NORWAY

By  
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At  
The Temple

On  
Sunday morning, April 28, 1940



My Friends: We often hear people say that history repeats itself. That is true in one way. History seldom, if ever, repeats itself in detail. It is true that some historians have actually defined what they called the morphology of history. The broad outline of universal history of mankind indicate a more or less consistent pattern in the great sweeps of world events. There are discernible in human history itself certain cycles like the seasons of the year which successively conquer one another and are conquered by one another. Human progress is not a consistent and unbroken upward climb. It is rather like a spiral movement, a circular movement steadily moving upward but not without periodic downward sweeps.

And it is so with the great ideas which motivate society - they too have their cycles. Take the great idea of freedom - freedom versus slavery. That cycle is persistent throughout human history. That famous Italian philosopher and historian, Croce wrote a book called "History - As the Story of Liberty". When you trace that set of twin ideas through history, you will find that there is no slavery - there never has been any form of slavery that has not yielded to freedom and there has not been any freedom but what is in danger of degenerating into slavery. Revolution and war put an end to slavery. Revolutions and wars have a way, frequently, of putting an end to freedom. Oppression and against tyranny prepare the way for revolution / slavery.

This fact of cycles in human experience is suggested by our Festival of Passover. The Jews had been free before they came to Egypt. They were free when they came to Egypt. Presumably for a long period of time in Egypt they remained free and then they lost their freedom. For four hundred years they became bondsmen. They groaned under the yoke of oppression. It seemed as though their lot forever was to be the lot of slaves. And it wasn't to be because neither slavery nor freedom possessed any finality. And soon the sparks of rebellion



began to fly in the hands and minds of these slaves. And soon a great leader arose and the chains of slavery were riven and the people was free again. And the people was free again, only to be enslaved again. When you read your Bible and the story of the early wanderings of the Jews in Palestine, you will discover a long series of cycles of freedom - slavery -- then freedom again. When you read the story of the Jews during the long period of Judges - you will read over and over again "God turned the people over into the hands of those who plundered them and enslaved them". They found themselves in desperate straits for longer and shorter periods of time. Then their God caused champions to arise and they delivered them from the hands of their plunderers and of those enslaved them. That cycle persists like a refrain throughout Jewish history.

At the beginning of the Sixth Century before the Common Era, the Babylonians invaded Palestine, destroyed it. They put an end to the political independence of the people and led the leaders of the people into exile in chains into Babylon. And in Babylon these exiles felt that they had been completely forgotten and sold into perpetual slavery. Their cry was: "Why hast Thou God forsaken us forever?" They regarded themselves as being the dead dry bones in a valley of death with no hope of resurrection. Then came an unexpected turn in history. The Kingdom of Babylon was conquered by the King of Persia. Cyrus immediately ordered: "Who among you that wants to go back to Judea can go. God be with him. He shall go back." And the cycle from slavery to freedom was completed again.

And so it was throughout the Middle Ages for our people. During the dark Middle Ages our fortunes seemed to sink to the lowest level. Never was our people so debased and degraded as during the long dark centuries. Our numbers dwindled to less than one million in the entire world and most of the one



million were hoveled in the ghettos and denied the decencies of human beings. They were denied contacts of the outside world. They dwelt as outcasts, aliens, slaves - worse than in Egypt. When you read from the Lamentations of the Jews of the Middle Ages you find a note of hopelessness. "We have been forgotten.

Then came another sharp turn in the history of the world. The French Revolution - the American Revolution put an end to the life of the Jews in the Middle Ages . A new day dawned for mankind and a new day suddenly dawned for Israel. The walls of the ghettos crumbled. Our people came forth again as they came forth out of Egypt. Throughout the Nineteenth Century - that glorious era of emancipation - our people gained a new lease on life, new fortunes and energies like a flood-tide came forth. The creative genius of our people long held under, burst forth. Then suddenly in the fourth decade of the twentieth century, as before, the cycle resumed back to slavery, worse than that of the Middle Ages. Oppression set in. Hundreds of thousands of our people were stripped of all their human rights and again they were declared outlawed, beyond the pale even of human compassion and pity and the edict of extermination was pronounced upon them.

The cycle has begun again - the cycle of slavery. But the cycle, my friends, will not end there. The cycle has already begun to move back into the realm of freedom. This is one of the great truths which the Festival of Passover brings to our minds - the ideals of cycle - and brings it to mind in another sense not peculiar to Jewish experience or to the Jews of Egypt. It applies to all peoples, not to any people. So many people refuse to recognize this fact. The drama on the Niles 3500 years ago - the conflict between freedom and slavery is being enacted again upon the fiords of Norway. Yesterday it was Finland, later Poland, Czechoslovakia, Spain and China. The Jews were not the only people who lost their freedom and recaptured it again. Other peoples have lost their freedom. Other peoples will lose their freedom. This cycle of freedom and slavery embraces in its sweep all people and all ages.



And this is the lesson which must be drawn from this fact. But some people are slow to recognize it. It is the fact that whenever one people or one race or one minority is persecuted by a nation or by a group of nations bent upon conquest and power - that is a warning signal. That should be a storm signal to all nations to all peoples, to all minorities. Especially is this true in the modern world which is so compactly knit together. Either all people are free, or no people are free. Seven years ago when the persecution of the Jews began in Germany the free peoples of the earth while they sympathized with the Jewish people said: "This is an internal affair of Germany. This isn't any concern of ours. How are we involved in it?" But the persecution in Germany was as little an internal affair of Germany say as an epidemic would be in one part of a city or in one part of a country and precautions were not taken to prevent its spread. Why a plague is not an internal affair of one particular part of a city or country. It would be stupid to assume that, wouldn't it? When a plague breaks out it is a potential menace to the whole country, the whole earth. Either stamp it out or isolate it. The nations of the world refused to do either of these two things with what results?

First the Jews became the victims of it. Then it was Austria and then the Czechs, and then the Poles and then the Danes, and the Norwegians. That is how the slavery spreads through the world. Who could have imagined seven years ago that this tyranny which crashed down upon the Jews so brutally would come in seven short years to engulf a peace-loving people like the Norwegians. Who could have imagined that that same power which robbed the Jewish citizens of their rights, would in seven years rob the people of Norway of their rights. The hand that smote the Jews has now smitten them.

That is the law of history, my friends. The people refused to recognize it. The hand that smote the Jews has now smitten them and will smite every free people. And therefore when we say that anti-Semitism is not a Jewish



problem, we are not saying it as propaganda. We are saying it to save mankind from the same fate which was visited upon a defenseless Jewish minority.

Anti-semitism is not only mankind's problem. It is mankind's storm signal. it is a warning that a beast is loose in the world - that slavery is about to attack the ideals of human freedom everywhere.

The Passover cycle is a cycle in yet another sense. You know from the reading of the Bible, if you do read the Bible, and you should read the Bible particularly in these times - there is not only great comfort in it and great wisdom and inspiration - the Jews were invited to come to Egypt. Pharoah told Joseph to return to Canaan and take all your household "and come to me and I will give you the best of the land of Egypt so that ye shall eat the fat of the land". When they came an official welcome was arranged for them. He gave them wagons to convey their families. "Come back he said. Never mind your goods: for the best of the whole land of Egypt will be yours." When they came he said: "The land of Egypt is at your disposal. And he gave them the land of Goshen to settle in. That was true also of the way the Jews went to Poland. They were invited to come and live there. The Jews were welcomed. Poland gave them protection. Then what happened. The Cycle. A new king arose who did not know what Joseph had done. A new regime arose - and presumably this new regime had a new program for Egypt - an imperialist program. They wanted to engage in conquest and they had to arouse national sentiment among their own people, and the way to that has always been to create antipathy toward some element in that country. That is the best way to arouse sentiment. That is what they did in Egypt. Suddenly the word went through the country that the people of Israel were too numerous and too many and too prosperous. We can't count on them when we go to war, they said. They will join with our enemies. And then they began to bear down on the people first through discriminatory



legislation. Then the confiscation of property took place and after that enforced labor. And to keep the numbers of their population down, the first born son was thrown into the Nile. Finally they were driven out. The cycle. First they were welcome and they prospered. They a new regime and there was fear, hate, persecution and expulsion. That is what happened in Spain. That is what happened in Germany. That is a fateful cycle.

And this cycle, my friends, is bound to continue until such a time when the right of any human being to enslave another group of human beings is finally and completely outlawed in the world. In other words, until the time of true liberty of the individual, of every individual, regardless of race, creed are established. The cycle.

And what happens if the Jews are driven out from a country? The Rabbis illustrated this thought of what happens to a country if the Jews are driven out. The Rabbis tell this story. "There was a man who found in his possession a rich collection of precious stones but unfortunately he did not know they were precious stones and that they were very valuable. So one day he decided to get rid of them. And he met a friend of his in another city. Look here, he said, I have this large collection of stones and I don't want them. Please take them. They are in the way. The other man said: I will take them. He took them and went to the city and he separated the stones, the little ones in one pile and the large in another pile and then he took them to the market place. The man who gave away the stones went one day to the market place and saw a large crowd of people standing around and he heard them say: How much is this? It is 100 lbs., 500 lbs., 1000 lbs. for the large stone. And this man saw that it was his friend selling the precious stones which he had given away and then he realized his error and said: What a fool I have been. I had all that wealth in my possession and I am poor and this man I have made rich." - One of those naive stories of the



Rabbis which is so profound.

What happens to a country when it throws away the precious spirit of the mind? What happened to Spain? Within a generation the impact began to be felt. The country began to sink into poverty, civil strife. For hundreds of years Spain remained a third-rate backward power.

What will happen to Germany? When the Thomas Manns and the Albert Einsteins - when all the great men of spirit and art and science have been driven from it and all other countries and it falls into dumb brutal silence and compliance - why that nation will sink as it has already begun to sink, into a brutal stupor.

Of all the countries of the world, Germany could least afford to lose the initiative and the spirit of its Jews and of its great liberal leaders. Non-Jews have also been driven from it. Because the German people has historically always been a hysterical people it has always been a problem to itself. It is a people given to excessive emotionalism, a people given to philosophic fanaticism, always suffering from weltschmerz which made it abnormal. That people could least afford to lose that element which represented sanity and stability to Germany.

The cycle here again. The cycle is at work.

And finally, my friends, in one other way does the Passover Holiday suggest the inevitable cycle in human people. People who have freedom frequently lose it because they set other values above the values of freedom. The American Revolution succeeded because its slogan was "Give me liberty or give me death." Liberty prevailed above everything else. When a people does that it is privileged to enjoy freedom. But the moment a people begins to set other values above it, it loses it. When a people, for example, begins to prefer economic security to liberty, or social appeasement to liberty, or national and racial pride to liberty, or any other values - that people is by way of losing liberty.



The Bible said that when Moses went to the Jews of Egypt to speak to them about freedom, they didn't listen to him. They were afraid that he would endanger the fleshpots they were enjoying. When he took them out from Egypt their path was a hard one. They weren't ready for it and threatened to kill him. Why did you take us out of Egypt? That generation had to die in the wilderness because they were not ready to endure hardship to get to it, to the land of Canaan.....

Moses could have lived in the land of Egypt. He was at the Palace with all the comforts to enjoy. He wasn't a slave. He was a free man. But Moses preferred to cast his lot with the lot of his brothers. He preferred to suffer in order to make them free. He went into exile for freedom. He came back and faced death for freedom, the misunderstanding of his people and the hatred of his people in order to be free. For the sake of freedom: "Let my people go". That spirit <sup>when it</sup> is recaptured in the world will free the world and not until then will men be free.

Last week I read an item in the paper which was symbolic. The Nazis in Prague found a statue of Moses. They ordered it pulled down. That was one of the most symbolic acts that could have happened. They couldn't tolerate Moses in Prague because to the Nazis as it stood there it was a warning and a threat that what happened before might happen again by the shores of the Volga. What happened to ancient Pharaoh might happen to Hitler. Moses was the symbol of the forces of human freedom. They tried to rid the city and the people of the symbol of Moses. But they could not rid the people of the spirit of Moses. All that Moses represented in Israel is now an idea which exists in the minds and hearts of hundreds of millions of people all over the world.

When the ancient Pharaohs died they wanted to preserve their carcasses. They had themselves embalmed and built around themselves pyramids. When



Moses died, said the Rabbis, nobody ever knew where he was buried. To this day no one knows the burial place because in the profound sense he is not there. He lives in the hearts and minds of the myriads of suffering and persecuted folks of the earth who will pray and fight for freedom. The cycle will resume again. From slavery to freedom.





Moses statue - In that act - Eternal story of

1) Hist. does not repeat itself in detail - Larger outlines frequently do -  
Great actions and reaches of trends and movements. Some historians  
have actually defined this morphology of the universal hist. world.  
There are discernible definite cycles - like the seasons of the  
year which successively expand and are compressed - Human  
progress is with a spiral, circular movements, climbing  
steadily upward, but not with out periodic downward move-  
ments.

units.

2/ It is no with Slavery & Freedom. — Pol. Econ. Intell. —

No slavery but what yields to freedom. No freedom but  
what <sup>is in danger of</sup> ~~degenerates~~ into slavery. Revolt. and was put an end to slavery. Revolt. and was put an end to freedom. Oppressions  
prepare the way for revolt. as slavery. Oppress. & exploit. & another  
kind prepare the way for defeat of freedom.

Panama suggests this Cycle: The Jews had been free. They lost their freedom - 400 years - They groaned - <sup>at last lost</sup> ~~soon~~ the first rebellion was crushed - A leader arose - The chains were broken. The people was free again! No finality to Slavery or to Freedom.

Over and over again in J. history.

I } Period 5 Judges. - <sup>plundages</sup> 101312 111111 - <sup>core signals</sup> 3111 1111 1111  
 Then 111111 111111 111111 111111 111111  
 The eternal cycle!

II Babylon - Exile - נבוכדנצר - Dried Bones - An  
unexpected turn of history - Perseus captures Babylon. -  
Gus - היה לנבוכדנצר



III) So in the Middle Ages - Sunk lowest depth of degradation & oppression -  
on Middle - pariahs - shelters - Whore -  
Fr. Revolution - shock would - crumbled shells walls -  
19C - glorious - flood-tide & J. achievement -  
Cycle again - And now in 4<sup>th</sup> decade, 20 -  
Wheel turn again - Back to slavery use them  
that & Egypt - Oppress Turk - But now to exterminate  
But the cycle will not end there!

9/ Cycle in another sense - Not peculiar to Jews or to Jews  
in Egypt -

The drama, the Nile - 3500 yrs ago - same drama now  
played among the fjords, Norway!  
Yesterday in Finland - Poland - Ghetto - Spain - China -  
Other people have lost - are losing - will lose their  
freedom - one form or another -  
Cycle & Sp. & Fr. envelops in its sweep all peoples - all  
ages.

And now when one people or race or minority is persecuted  
by a nation or a group, nations hunt upon Power and  
Conquest - that should be a signal and a warning to  
all peoples!

In the modern world - so close knit - either all  
as free or none! Internal affairs!  
Contagious disease: Stamp it out or eradicate it!







of Cycle - And what happens after Jesus on dinner cart?

Michael - Jewels -

What happened in Paris? What at first -

What will happen to Germany - His best minds - 1648.

will sink into stupor - brutalized

This is Cycle, Rebirth!

For this people needs its leaders: a somewhat hysterical people,  
always a problem to itself - a nation given to the "baroque"  
in emotion - <sup>phil. fabrications</sup> suffering from a vague, chaotic "Weltanschauung"  
- made abnormal by the tech. revol. 19C.

6). Free (Fr. Vigilance and Sacrifice

"Give us liberty or give us death"

[Social Oppression]  
Give us security  
from our for. future  
dynast. hat.  
Racialism

Super servitude with security - 1846 11/11 - 2820 210

Masses - 1831 - 1848 - misunderstood - Ston. him -

That  
know my People <sup>God</sup>!

7). Prayer - struggle now on!

1871 11/11 - Pyramids - Hearts

Spent, Masses a - this is world again! Let my

people p. free!



1/ Midst 9 noo - Moses -  
Here - Mankind - Wash-Live  
Seal -

2/ Those who hate freedom - hate  
Moses - Prague - noo

3/ R. Judah b. Bezalel Levi Siin  
350 ys - Greatest - Miracle  
Pogrom - dream - Son-in-  
law - Papal - Moldau -  
clay - 9 ft - 7 times  
cl - came to life -  
Understood - Shew -  
Returned to Heaps clay

4/ Strong faith in Redemption

5/ In Future



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