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The Leader! True and False Leaders of Men, 1943.

623
THE LEADER!
True and False Leaders of Men

By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday Morning, April 25, 1943



Ours is an "Age of Leaders"! - of Fu^rbers, Duces...With the abdication of free self-government came the era of self-proclaimed leaders, leaders who arrogated to themselves not only omnipotence but also omniscience and infallibility. Some of these leaders allowed their followers or encouraged them to exalt them, to deify them, and they welcomed or manufactured a sort of nimbus, an atmosphere about themselves. These leaders had to do that because dictatorship rests not upon moral law nor upon the consent of the governed. There is need to find some basis of law for it, some justification, some rationalization. So Fascism and Nazism found this new principle -- the idea of leadership - Fuhrertum.

According to this political philosophy a leader is not chosen, but took hold of his office by virtue of the consent of his followers. The leader is in some mystic way an incarnate genius of the people, of the race. He is the highest expression of their soul, their ideals. He instinctively divines their needs and as instinctively knows how to satisfy them. He does not need to consult them and his followers, while experiencing and following him implicitly and blindly come to share in his life, in his acts and in his decisions, and experience a special grace, a mystic charm. Anyone who opposes him opposes the the national idea, the national soul. He therefore commits not only treason, but sacrilege as well.

The leader can do no wrong. To quote one of the tenets of the Nazi Movement: "The leader must be free from all unnecessary restraints and scruples... He must know the art of hating...In the pursuit of his aim he must not refrain even from bloodshed and war." He is his own law! Should he decide that some of his followers should be purged, or that sections of the population should be liquidated, or that certain people should be tortured, or that certain groups of people should be deprived of citizenship, or that treaties be violated, it is all ~~allowed~~ allowed him provided he decides that the national interest requires it.

Now this is the new idolatry of the 20th Century. And it has evolved as

ghastly a ritual and as bloody a rite as any pagan idolatry of ancient days. And Europe is still under the domination of this leadership ideal. But the hands of destiny are even now exorcising that spell, and preparing the doom of this 20th century abomination.

Now nowhere is the contrast between this neo-paganism of our day and Judaism so much in evidence, so vividly in evidence as in their different conceptions of what constitutes leadership and who is the true leader of men.

The Jewish people had great leaders. The greatest of them is the central figure in this Festival of Passover which we are celebrating - Moses. He is one of the two three greatest leaders of all mankind. The Jewish people recognized the importance of leadership and of leaders. They recognize the decisive role which a leader frequently plays in the history of mankind. "The Leader of a generation is sometimes equal to the entire generation", said a Rabbi. Moses was equal in moral importance, in critical significance as all the rest of the people put together.

He was far greater than any of the brood of leaders who clutter up the stage of the world today. Moses was the greatest revolutionist, in fact the first known to history. He was the great emancipator of the people. He was a great warrior. He was a great Law-giver, a great nation-builder. His Law has survived not a decade or two, but 3000 years, and half of mankind today still reveres the Law of Moses. That Law inspired and moulded countless people on all the continents and in all centuries. And the people whom Moses emancipated and molded into a nation, that people, too has survived for more than 3000 years and has created ~~many of~~ the most noble religious civilizations of the world. This religion has outlived vast empires, and still confronts defiantly the latest attempt, after countless unsuccessful ones, to destroy them.

Truly a great Leader to whose greatness centuries and civilizations bear testimony. It is therefore interesting to enquire what principle of leadership did Moses represent? What kind of a leader was he? How did the non-Aryan Hebrews

conceive of their leader? Did they concede to him omnipotence and omniscience and infallibility? Did they proceed to deify him? Did they yield him blind unquestioning obedience? Did Moses regard himself as a law unto himself? Did Moses himself come to think of himself as a law unto himself? Did he set himself in place of the Omnipotent God? A very important question to ask, for upon the answer to it depends the attitude of the life of a people, of a civilization, the kind of a world people want.

A rather revolting characteristic of modern leaders, dictators, fuhrers, duces is their shameless conceit and arrogance. Their spoken words are full of braggadiocio, insolence. Their swagger and bluster and super-men affectations outrage the sensibilities of cultured people. They are an inordinately coarse lot of exhibitionists and braggarts, these modern dictators whom the world has been asked to deify.

Of Moses, the Jewish leader, the Bible says that he was the most modest men. "This man, Moses, was the humblest of all men who lived upon the face of the earth." That is the highest tribute which the Bible could pay the greatest leader of Israel. He was extremely modest. He was so modest that when the summons came to him, when in the burning bush he heard the voice of God summoning him to destiny: "Bring thy people out of slavery," Moses replied, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" Here was the modesty of his ^{true} greatness. Moses did not believe that the whole world had been ^{just} set/for him, the chosen one, the select one, the important one. On the contrary, face to face with this tremendous challenge to assume leadership in a great hour, he became aware of his limitations, unworthiness, of his unfitness for the great task. "Please God," he pleaded, "I am not a man of words. I am not an eloquent man. I haven't the gift that is required. Please, God, send someone else."

He was reluctant to accept leadership. He did not maneuver and conspire to become a leader. He did not organize his henchmen into squads to beat up

their opposition. He did not burn the Reichstag in order to insure an election and then announce himself as the beloved and universally accepted leader of all men.

Modesty is a spiritual quality which decides the very textures of the entire career of a leader. And the opposite of modesty in a leader is aggression and cruelty. Moses was modest. Moses did not take unto himself any exclusive excellencies or any monopolistic privileges. He was not jealous of power, or afraid of competition. He did not see himself as the apex of a pyramid, with the masses at the bottom, inherently inferior to the elite above them and of course to himself, the very tip-top of inaccessible greatness. Not at all! That is how modern leaders conceive of themselves in relation to society.

Moses was the greatest of prophets, and according to the Rabbis, the most original. All the others merely confirmed the prophetic teachings of Moses. Moses, say the Rabbis could see through clear glasses. Moses did not wish even this rarest gift of prophecy to be restricted to himself, for his exclusive possession. He wanted everybody to have it. When two men who said that the spirit of God was upon them began to prophesy in the camp, Joshua ran to Moses and said: "Shut them off. Lock them up. They are usupers. dare How/they prophesy whey you are the only prophet." And Moses turned to Joshua and said: "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that God would put His spirit upon all men." Those who know professional jealousy, those who know the fear which haunts all tyrants and despots will realize what spiritual grandeur this reveals in the character of the Jewish leader, Moses.

Moses was not a law unto himself. Moses revealed God's law to Israel and mankind and he himself was bound by that law. He governed his people for 40 years by the same principles which he prescribed for the regulations of their lives -- justice, truth and charity.

Hitler once said that "Dominion is never founded on humanity, but on crime and that he was out for dominion." Therefore he became the greatest criminal in history. Moses was not out for dominion. He was out to serve God and therefore

his life of service was not founded upon crime, but upon humanity. Moses never conceived of himself as being a servant of the state or even a servant of the Jewish people. Moses was a servant of God. Therefore his whole life was motivated and regulated by the moral laws of God. Thus, for example, Moses never persecuted the stranger as modern tyrants do. He never exploited the stranger. He never used the stranger as a stepping stone to further his career. Moses befriended the stranger. "Ye shall not oppress the stranger in your midst for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." Moses did not provoke wars. He tried to avoid them. He did not regard pity as effeminate and cruelty as masculine. He did not believe that brutality and irony show up man at his best. To Moses, God was a God of mercy. When Israel sinned and deserved the visitation of God's wrath, he interceded for them: "God, it is true the people have sinned, have worshipped the golden calf which they made. That is true. But, God, they are your people and you have charged me with the responsibility of teaching them, guiding them. Wipe me off from your Book of Life, but not those people!"

And when Moses sinned, he was punished like any other man for his sins. One law for the great and the small, for the leader and the follower, for the stranger and the native born. That is the Jewish conception of leadership. Moses did not kill off the opposition. He didn't put his critics in concentration camps. Moses was frequently abused and mal-treated by his people, by the erstwhile slaves ^{out} whom he brought/ of Egypt. They were ungrateful, fault-finding and thought everything he did was wrong. The Rabbis said that if he got up in the morning the people found fault with him, if he slept late they said he must have spent the night carousing; if he walked among the people in the camp he was accused of spying on them; if he walked by himself they said he wanted to have none of him; Everything he did was wrong. If there wasn't enough food it was Moses' fault. They railed against him and stoned him. "Why did you take us out of Egypt where there was plenty of onions and garlic, etc. Why did Moses bring them out here to die

when they lived so peacefully in the land of Egypt. And Moses had no Gestapo and no body guard.

Frequently Moses was embittered by men, to be sure. But he was human and his heart weakened and he forgave them. He knew that his people were distressed, and he forgave them. He knew the nature of the multitude, how fickle, how easily swayed and how easily frightened and how short its memory. He forgave them.

He suffered at their hands, but he never gave up. He led them, taught them, educated their children, for he placed the entire hope of the future in their youth. He never gave up and after forty years of hard leadership he brought his people to the gates of the Promised Land and he died with his generation, the generation who caused him so many heart-aches which somehow became the protoplasm out of which progress of was carved the/mankind for thirty centuries.

The Rabbis sum it all up, this contrast by commenting on the difference between Moses and Balaam. Balaam was the greatest prophet of the Gentiles, just as Moses was the greatest prophet of the Jews. Balaam, say the Rabbis, was not inferior to Moses in wisdom and scholarship. Yet Moses' name is an everlasting blessing, and Balaam's is an everlasting malediction. What was this difference? The difference was a very simple one. Moses exhorted his people to keep the law, the moral law. Balaam exhorted his people to give up the law, the moral law. Moses had pity not only for his own people, for all other people, as well. When misfortune overtook his people, his heart weakened for them. Balaam had no pity in his soul. Moses had pity for other nations. When misfortune overtook them, it caused him to suffer. Balaam was out to annihilate an entire nation without any cause, he was so cruel. Balaam, say the Rabbis, never did anything good or kind in the world! That is the decisive difference.

How much goodness and how much kindness have these deified modern leaders done in the world, either to their own, or to the rest of the world. They brought upon the world suffering, sorrow and misery.

Jewish leadership, Jewish leaders have worked through law. Jewish leadership

is democratic. Jewish leaders aimed at benefiting not only the Jewish people, but all the people. It was only such leadership that Israel revered and followed. A Jewish leader was known as "a man of God", not a deified human being, not a man who was impressed with his own importance, but a man of God, a man who humbly was in the Service of God, who sought to establish God's wisdom on earth through justice, truth and charity. This was the picture painted in the Bible of Moses -- "Moses is a man of God."



of this Leadership - but the hands of destiny are ever now exercising that spell, and preparing the doors of this abomination.

3) Nowhere is the contrast bet. this neo-paganism & Judaism so vividly evidenced as in the differing concepts of leadership. The J. people had great leaders. The greatest, there is the archetypal figure, the father of 1000. Moses! One, the 3 or 4 great leaders, Manfred.

- The J. people recognized the importance of leaders - the deeds which they frequently play in the history of a people.

- "The Leader of a generation is sometimes equal to the entire generation."

- Exodus, Book 32:1-35:26

Far greater than any of the band of "leaders" who clutter up the story of the world to-day. He was the Revolutionist - the first in history - the Emancipator of a people - the warrior - the law-giver - the nation builder.

- His Law has survived for 3000 yrs - and 1/2 of manlands still revere it. - Inspired countless peoples on all the continents of the earth.

- His people - whom he molded and set upon their hist. career - has created the most rel. civilization, the world - survived the long centuries, withstood vast empires, and still confronts defiantly the latest attempt, after countless un- necessary ones, to destroy them.

- Truly a great leader! to whom millions centuries and civilizations have testimony.

- What kind of principle, leadership did he represent? What kind of a leader was he? How did the non-Aryan Hebrews conceive of their leader? Did they concede to him no infirmary & no infirmity & no infallibility?

Did they proceed to defy him? Did they yield him blood (3)
wagering the lives?

Did Mr. regard himself as a law unto himself? Could do
no wrong? Did he set himself up in the place of God?
Chambers

4) A rather revolting charac. of modern Leaders - ^{showing} ~~utter~~ arrogance and conceit. Their spoken words are full of braggadocio, insolence. Their swagger and bluster, and super-men affectations - outrage the sensitivities of cultured people. They are an inordinately coarse lot of ^{egotists and} ~~egotists and~~ braggarts -

② Of M - the Bible declares - most modest of men! → he lived
וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיָמָיו וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּ בְּיָמָיו . The "man" M - not the super-man!

② So modest - when summons came - "Burning Bush" - זָכָה!
אֵלֵינוּ, מֵאֵלֶיךָ וְאֵלֵינוּ
 I replied - וְאֵלֵינוּ
וְאֵלֵינוּ

This was the modesty of true greatness. He did not feel that whole world had been waiting just for him - the select one - the chosen one! On the contrary he was aware of his humbleness, and his own unworthiness for that great task.

Elozement! - 2, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 3, 2, 1, 2, 1.

He was reluctant to accept leadership!
He did not maneuver & conspire to become the "leader"

organize his henchmen into squads of slappers and bruisers
to beat up + terrorize his opponents - burnt the Backstory
to insure an election & then announce himself as the beloved
& universally accepted leader of his people!

Modesty is a sp. quality which decides the texture of the entire career of a leader - The opposite of modesty in Leaderships is aggression and cruelty!

8/ Rabbin sum up contrast Moss O'Balaban - greatest prophets
of justice. - not inferior in wisdom & skill. - why is one - blowing
① M. exhorted people to keep from sin cause
B. " " to go up the moral course, hfs.

② M. had Pity for other nations - his fortune on test them - caused
him to suffer.

B. was so cruel that he wanted to destroy an entire
nation without any cause

③ B. never did anything good or kind in this world!

9/ Jewish leadership was moral - worked thru law ^{was democratic} & aimed
to benefit not only J. people but all people!

only such leadership was respected & followed by Israel.

A Jewish leader is an ethical life; and that is
exactly what X1 was called.