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Judaism and world peace, 1943.

Judaism and World Peace.

AKBA Hebrew School

International peace is of the very essence of the ethical doctrine of Judaism and the propagation of it has been part of the historic mission of Israel.

The ideal of universal peace springs directly from Judaism's concept of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. Racial, national and cultural divisions among men have historical validity and serve the purposes of the Almighty. But the primary spiritual validity appertains to man as such in his capacity as a child of God and to the human family as a whole. While not ignoring the separate identities and groupings in human society the emphasis of Judaism has been upon their harmonious co-existence, the peaceful adjustment of their differences and their collaboration in establishing God's Kingdom on Earth.

All nations have appointed functions to perform in the divine economy and are variously endowed. Some possessing special gifts and aptitudes and others are favored by special opportunities. Some are culturally retarded and others advanced. Such advantages, wherever enjoyed, only impose additional responsibilities upon the possessor and make increasingly mandatory a more sensitive concern for the rights of the backward and the under-privileged. Judaism recognizes no inherent national or major superiority and has consistently repudiated the exploitation of all such fictitious pretexts to dominate and to exploit other peoples. So-called backward peoples must not be treated as subject peoples and regarded as proper spoil for colonial and imperial ^{interests} ~~advantages~~. Rather are they to be helped by appropriate international action to achieve as rapidly as possible their independence and their social and cultural improvement.

Judaism is a religion of peace but not of pacifism. It believes in resisting evil and it recognizes the duty of men and ⁿnations to resort to arms when right can not otherwise be enforced. Violence must at all times be confronted with a counter ^{vailing} ~~force~~ force, morally motivated. Where there is no agency which can effectively check an aggressor nation it is the right and the moral obligation of the nation whose security is threatened or, where the basic values of civilization are endangered, of all nations, to resist to the utmost and to employ military force

to avert the dangers. War, however, should be the last and utterly unavoidable resort, and nations which have recourse to war should close^{ly} search their hearts to discover whether any other motives are in fact influencing their decision and whether all peaceful avenues have really been ~~exploited~~^{explored}. Judaism does not look upon war as an ultimate and inextricable fact in the life of humanity nor does it regard it as a necessary element in the physical or spiritual progress of mankind. Man's natural combativeness must be sublimated to nobler and less primitive areas of struggle and ~~should~~^{can} be given full scope in socially constructive and challenging enterprises. War is at all times evidence of the gross and indurate evils and imperfections which still exist in human society and it should be regarded always as ^a summons to destroy them.

Judaism also conceived of the necessity of organizing for peace and of creating a permanent international society whose members will ~~be voluntarily~~^{themselves} covenant^d to observe the moral law of God. Nations ~~can~~^{they separate} find a just and durable peace only as they merge ~~their separate~~ national interests with the larger interests of the corporate life of humanity. Judaism recognizes no national sovereignty which is not subordinate to the higher moral law of God. No nation is above this law. No nation is a law unto itself. Every nation is morally responsible and accountable to God Who is the source and ~~sanction~~^{life} of all ~~rights~~^{rights}, individual ~~and~~^{or} collective. There can be no permanent peace without the surrender of unqualified, uncordinated and willful sovereignty. For nations to be free they must be free within the disciplines of international law and practice, ~~and~~^{and} only in such freedom ~~in~~^{within} law is ~~their~~^{there} assurance of enduring peace.

Judaism was first among the great religions of the world to proclaim the ideal of universal disarmament which will come as a natural consequence upon the establishment of a strong international order. Nations will beat their swords into plowshares only when the necessity for swords will no longer exist, when there will be in operation an international agency sufficiently strong and ~~adequately~~ implemented to insure the protection of ~~every~~^{every} nation against unwarranted aggression.

Peace can come only with reconciliation. Judaism is concerned with the destruction of evil rather than ^{of} the evil-doer, and with the eradication of the causes which lead ~~nations~~ to war. Aggressor nations must of course be defeated and deprived of the power to do mischief a second time. Governments and their leaders who are responsible for bringing war, suffering and destruction upon the world must be punished. ^{Retributive} ~~Responsible~~ justice is neither revenge nor retaliation but a requisite condition of ^{when} national morality. Forgiveness ^{must} wait upon contrition and restitution. But the durable peace must, in the last analysis, be based upon good will and universal reconciliation, and upon the voluntary association of nations as equals within a world community, regardless of their ~~past~~ moral offenses of which no nation is entirely ~~without~~ blame ^{less}.

Judaism maintains that no peaceful organization of society is possible unless it is built upon the full political, economic and social ^{of men} rights everywhere. It is only the work of righteousness which can yield peace, and it is only upon justice and truth that peace can securely rest. Poverty and economic misery lead to internal strife and revolutionary agitation which are frequently channeled by the threatened ~~x~~ privileged classes into international strife and wars of conquest. Nations which are denied free access to the trade and raw material of the world live constantly in the hope that war will give them what peace denies. Minorities who suffer from political discrimination are ^{also} ~~really~~ pre-disposed to welcome international upheavals which may hold for them the promise of emancipation.

The task of building a world peace is not an easy one. Though the ideal was first proclaimed by our prophets nearly twenty-eight centuries ago, ~~it is~~ its attainment seems far more ^{remote} ~~removed~~ today than ~~it~~ at any time during these long centuries. Nevertheless our religion urges upon ^{us} ~~men~~ an unfaltering faith in the future and in man's power to achieve the seemingly impossible things once he becomes possessed of the power and the might of the spirit of God. It is heartening to remember that the first major attempt to create ^{an} international world order was actually made in our generation, and though it failed because

of certain lamentable flaws in its structure, it has nevertheless pointed the way and has aroused the determination of men to essay again and, by averting the mistakes of the past, build anew upon surer foundations

