

## VICTORY IN EUROPE

BY

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Since my return to the United States, I have heard much debate as to the nature of V-E Day, when we celebrated our victory in Europe over the Nazi foe. My own personal feeling is that our victory in Europe is analogous in many ways to the liberation of our ancestors from the bondage of Egypt. For that reason it might be well to take cognizance of the parallels that exist between these two epoch making occurrences, and then draw our conclusion as to how V-E Day should be properly celebrated.

To begin with, I see the finger of G-d in the recent crossing of the Rhine by our troops no less than in the miraculous division of the Red Sea for our ancestors. For the generals as well as the soldiers on the line felt that the Rhine crossing would be as difficult as D-Day, and perhaps even more costly. But the lone undestroyed bridge at Remagen, standing just as the waters of the Red Sea, made that crossing possible with hardly the loss of a man. To one who knows the care and precision of the Nazi enemy, such a costly blunder can best be explained in terms of Divine intervention.

Our ancestors celebrated the "Keriath Yam Soof" with the singing of that majestic glorification of G-d that is read

in the Synagogue today—"Then sang Moses and Israel this song to the Lord." Certainly it is fitting and appropriate then that we, too, sing our joy and praises when victory in Europe becomes a reality.

But I am afraid that far too many of us are going to acknowledge V-E Day *only* with song and good cheer. And when the songs and cheers are ended, we think that we shall return to the same world and to the same life as before. That, unfortunately, was the attitude of a substantial portion of our brethren liberated from Egypt as well. The Midrash tells us

אמרו ישראל באותה שעה — כלום הוציאנו הקב"ה ממצרים אלא בשביל חמשה דברים : (א) לתת לנו בית מצרים; (ב) להרכיבנו על ענני כבוד; (ג) לקרוע לנו את הים; (ד) להפדע מן המצרים; (ה) לומר לפניו שירה. עכשיו כבר נתן לנו בית מצרים, והרכיבנו על ענני הכבוד, וקרע לנו את הים, ופרע מן המצרים, ואמרנו שירה לפניו — נחזור למצרים.

Israel said after the crossing of the Red Sea: "G-d brought us forth from Egypt for a five-fold purpose: to give us the plunder of the Egyptians, to lead us with His clouds of glory, to divide the Red Sea for us, to avenge us of the Egyptians, and to have us sing of His Glory. Now that this five-fold purpose has been served, let us return to Egypt."

Moses, the great leader of Israel, soon corrected this false attitude, however, with the following words

כך אמר די המקום כי כאשר ראייתם את מצרים היום לא תוסיפו לראותם עוד עד שלום.

Thus said the Almighty to me: "For as you see Egypt today you shall never see it again."

You may want to return to Egypt, you may say the Egyptians are dead, but you cannot return. Nay, we must

instead proceed to the mountain of Sinai. For not only are the Egyptians dead, but the world of Egypt is gone as well! We must now build a new world, a new world revolving around Sinai's Torah!

The old world to which many of us would return is likewise dead. Tremendous upheavals are taking place all over the globe. In Europe one sees the tragic physical destruction before one's eyes. Large segments of the continent are but heaps of rubbles, blown to bits by a world that has permitted the Deification of Force. Certainly a builder can commit no greater folly than to rebuild a fallen edifice without changing the blueprint and the materials. It would be equally tragic to reconstruct Europe without taking cognizance of the need for change.

Tremendous economic and sociologic upheavals are likewise apparent. The people of liberated Europe are hungry, ill-clothed, without shelter. The result is moral cynicism and mental hopelessness. Revolution, anarchy or both can be anticipated if the world attempts to reconstruct itself upon the false bases of the pre-war period. Whether we will it or not, the world has changed. We had better change with it, or our civilization will collapse around us like a house of cards. To think then, that the destruction of Germany and the elimination of the Nazis is an automatic guarantee that our world can begin again right where it left off, is but to delude ourselves.

These are the changes that I feel must take place. First of all, we must create a world that is whole. There is a choice only between one world and no world. No alternatives are possible. Dumbarton Oaks points out the way—the only way. It is therefore heartening to learn that America has

reconsidered its request for three votes in the proposed International Council. By ceding two votes it has won a tremendous moral victory for the cause of one world.

Secondly, we must create a democracy that is personal. In our country, unfortunately, the people participate directly in their government only once in four years when they go to the polls to vote for a president. The result of this democracy by representation has been to create a psychologic schism in our thinking between ourselves and our government. This schism reveals itself negatively today in the vicious practice known as black-marketing. For how else can one explain the actions of otherwise patriotic Americans who illegally traffic in food, today one of our most vital war weapons?

It is interesting to note the Rabbinic interpretation of a very beautiful passage of the "Shira". The Rabbis explain the passage "This is my G-d and I shall beautify Him" in the followings words:

ראתה שפחה על הים מה שלא ראה יחזקאל ושאר נביאים (מכילתא)

The Hand-maid standing on the banks of the Red Sea was able to see that which Ezekiel and the other prophets could not envision.

The Hand-maid at the Red Sea, awakened from her spiritual lethargy by the great miracle that she was a part of, was capable of seeing G-d. That privilege was denied Ezekiel and the other prophets. Never before or after has there been a more democratic statement made, a statement glorifying the capacity of common men and women when once awakened. Today, too, the common man has been aroused by the catalysmic occurrences and Divine miracles of which he is a part. He must therefore learn that his vision

and capacity can be even nobler and greater than that of the leaders and prophets of our age.

The average man and woman hates war. War to them means either the loss of sons and husbands or their exile to foreign lands to undergo untold hardships. Power Politics and imperialistic designs do not interest them. Therefore the self-articulation of the people, the creation of personal democracy is our only sure guarantee that future wars will never come to pass.

Thirdly, we must create for ourselves a faith that is vital. In normal times under normal conditions it may be understandable that only the Ezekiels, the Prophets, the Rabbis strive to see G-d. But today, when our world has once again witnessed the destruction of the forces of evil even the Maid-servant, You, I, must find G-d and make Him a part of our lives!

In our day, millions of young men see their G-d vividly and meet Him personally in the foxholes of Europe and Asia. These men, moreover, have met G-d not only as the "Adonoi Ish Milchomo"—the G-d of War: they also see Him as "Adonoi Shemo"—the G-d of Mercy who has spared their lives. Upon their return, they can become a tremendous force in the rebuilding of Judaism. By making our faith vital, we can make theirs enduring.

Our men will also return from the war with ideas of their own, ideas born out of the tragic realism that has been their life for several years. They are coming back with a hatred for compromise, chicanery, duplicity, and hypocrisy wherever these reveal themselves, in religion as well as in politics. Lin Yutang, the Chinese philosopher, says in a recent book that far more important than the Four Freedoms

is a Fifth that our world must learn—Freedom from Humbug. Our men have learned that lesson and will resent humbug in every form, but particularly in religion.

My feeling is that whenever religion becomes a vital force in life, Orthodoxy regains its dominance. When men are interested in superficial faith, they are enticed by the stentorian tones of Rabbis and the small thin voices of mixed choirs. But when men see G-d and witness His handwork, they reject "Merchandised" religion no matter how beautifully wrapped in vocal cellophane. In our day when we have seen a second crossing of the Red Sea, we need a vital G-d. The philosophy of "Ze Eli V'Aanvehu"—"This is my G-d and I shall beautify Him" is not enough. We want, need, and must have also the belief that He is "Elohey Ovi V'Aromemenhu"—"The G-d of my father and I shall exalt Him."

V-E Day warrants celebration. But it also demands dedication—the dedication of ourselves to the creation of a world that is one, a Democracy that is personal, a faith that is vital, traditional, exalting! AMEN.