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**Editorial**

**WHY IS THIS NIGHT DIFFERENT?**

At Pesach time, every one is or should be happy. The holiday comes at the right time when, in the words of Scriptures, "the winter is gone and the voice of the turtle dove is heard in the land." And when the turtle doves begin to sing, who will not sing with them?

These are the days for matzos and kneidlech and even bitter herbs, symbolic of the oppression of enslavement, taste good. And of course there are also the four cups of wine for all to imbibe. So let no skeptics or iconoclasts diminish their number of import.

Properly enough Pesach is a holiday for children, and so on the nights of the s'dorim then are elevated to the high position of asking the eternal question, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" And on this night of wonder there is still another wonder for them when they are summoned by the master of the table to open the door for the expectation that is Elijah.

Some three thousand years back, a man who was a relative stranger to his people appeared to the children of Israel in Egypt and called on them to follow him to freedom. Fears and doubts must have assailed him. The immortal Heine once said that whenever he conjures up the picture of Moses standing on Sinai, the mountain seemed dwarfed under him.

What mountain of faith must have been in this man Moses to believe that he could take this inchoate mass of slaves, lead them through a wilderness and render them into a nation which would raise a torch to the world.

The Hagda bids us celebrate Passover with the felling that we ourselves went out of Egypt. For this generation the identification with our ancestors should not be difficult. We have witnessed a tyranny in our times surpassing that of Pharaoh and we too have seen the children of Israel going up again into the land which the Lord their God promised to Abraham.

Father Abraham would probably be pleased to see his native Beersheba today. In his day, according to the Midrash, his house had doors open on all sides so that all wayfarers, from whatever direction they came, might partake on his shelter and hospitality. Beeresheba today has no exact counterpart to Abraham's dwelling, but it has nice hotels and Mr. Ben Gurion is even planning to build a college adjacent to that ancient site. In Abraham's days the dwellers were few. Today, thanks largely to Israel Bonds, some 250,000 Jews are settled in the Negev, an area whose development "is our most pressing current task," as Ben Gurion recently told us on his three-week whirlwind visit to the United States.

In the spirit of the Hagada, we who live in America can identify ourselves with that too, directly or indirectly. It is both a duty and something to recall with pride in later days.

Let the wine of rejoicing be in all Jewish homes as we sit down in remembrance of that distant day when enslavement gave way to freedom, despair to expectation and landlessness to roots.

**Passion Play Anti Vatican**

By Robert E. Segal

Proceeding on the theory that the most auspicious time to discuss abrasions over religious plays and pagentry is not during the Christmas or Easter or Chanukah seasons when feelings run high, but at other times, let us now consider the challenge presented by the upcoming presentation in 1970 of the Oberammergau Passion Play. We have three years to go; and the rumblings are with us already.

They are with us because Paris and Manchester, England, had sample runs of the Passion Play not long before Easter. In the course of those productions, under guidance of Jacob Blume, a German actor and director, it became clear that the responsibility for averting the damage done by this ancient pageant rests squarely with church authorities.

In London, John Cardinal Heenan decided in February to take no official action on a report by members of his advisory commission that the Oberammergau Passion Play was anti-Semitic and a misrepresentation of the Gospel story. Sister Louise-Gabriel, a member of the national commission appointed by Cardinal Heenan in 1965 to apply the Vatican Declaration on the Jews to contemporary situations, asserted that the play, then headed for Manchester, was directly opposed to the spirit of the Vatican declaration. She declared that the play presented Jews as bad, strongly emphasized the role of Judas, and was likely to have a prejudicial effect on the minds of children watching it.

Cardinal Heenan acknowledged that the Passion Play conveyed anti-Semitic sentiments. But inasmuch as it was going to have its English production outside his archdiocese, he decided not to take action.

Perhaps then Augustin Cardinal Bea will do what Cardinal Heenan failed to do. The gentle, heroic German cardinal, we are informed, is not officially in charge of Vatican relations with Jews, by announcement of Paola Cardinal Marella, chairman of the Vatican Secretariat for Relations with Non-Christian Religions. Between now and the Passion Play season of 1970, Cardinal Bea has plenty of time to devote to the scandal of Oberammergau.

He could begin by turning to the statement Adolf Hitler made about the Oberammergau Passion Play on July 5, 1942:

"One of our most important tasks will be to remain forever watchful in the knowledge of the menace of Jewry. For this reason alone, it is vital that the Passion Play be continued at Oberammergau; for never has the menace of Jewry been so convincingly portrayed as in this presentation of what happened in the times of the Romans. There one sees in Pontius Pilate a Roman racially and intellectually superior, there he stands out like a firm, clean rock in the middle of the whole muck and mire of Jewry."

Then Cardinal Bea might wish to sit down and talk with Hans Schwaighofer who was man enough to resign as director for the 1970 Oberammergau Passion Play back in October because he failed in his attempt to eliminate anti-Jewish overtones from the script. (The text, originating in 1634, was revised in 1860 by J. A. Daisenberger. The play is produced at Oberammergau every ten years in keeping with a pledge made by the villagers who survived a plague that revisited Bavaria in the early 17th century.)

Again, the Cardinal will find available the more acceptable but unused text prepared in 1750 by a Benedictine monk, Ferdinand Rosner. Why not use this since it deals with the Passion in allegorical manner?

Finally, the good Cardinal Bea may wish to consider long and prayerfully the obvious fact that the decennial performance at Oberammergau -- one of the heaviest box office activities in theatrical history -- is surely as much a commercial venture as it is a religious exercise. Many churchmen have been sharply critical of the play as a business bonanza.

How many lights have to go on to point the way towards honorable ecumenism before appropriate action is taken regarding the rough romp of Oberammergau, so offensive to Jews and to all others who care about religious sensibilities?

TEL AVIV (WNS) Minister of Finance Pinhas Sapir, addressing a meeting here, disclosed that Israel's defense budget this year will be "several tens of millions of dollars" higher than it was in 1966.

BRASILIA (WNS) A move by Franz Paul Stangl, commandant of the Nazi death camps in Treblinka and Sobibor, to secure release from prison backfired here when the high court rejected his bid for freedom under a habeas corpus.

VIENNA (WNS) Nineteen Hungarian war criminals charged with torturing and killing 250 Jews in Budapest in 1944, have thrown themselves on the mercy of the court with pleas of clemency.

BAIFA (WNS) A suggestion that a five day week in place of Israel's present six-day work week will help solve the country's economic crisis was proposed here by Mayor Abba Khoushy of this city.

**TELL TALES**

"One Man Plus The Truth Constitutes A Majority"

BY JACK TELL



No "Tell Tales" column this time. Grandparents Bea and Jack are recuperating from a week-long visit of their two grandchildren. It was the most pleasant madhouse we've ever enjoyed.

**PASSOVER MARVEL**

(The following information was gathered from the Columbia Encyclopedia, The Story of Pesach published by a commercial matzoth company, and Tolstoi.)

How much can be added to a story that has been commemorated and told in every Jewish family during the annual Seder? True, each year the ceremonial portion of the traditional party dwindles, while the menu for the feast keeps expanding in proportion to the new products that hit the market, labeled Kosher for Passover. The soup-to-nuts Seder now includes canned soups, frozen meats, all flavors of soda pop, many kinds of candy and after-dinner mints - all legitimately in keeping with Passover dietary laws, and stylish.

But the story persists, nevertheless.

It had its inception long before Moses, when Jacob's son Joseph, was sold into slavery by his brothers. Joe, with his Jewish "kup" interpreted a dream of the king Pharaoh which saved Egypt from starvation. All Joe did was store up grain during the years of plenty for food during the years of starvation.

Generations later, another Pharaoh, panicked by interpretation of a nightmare, ordered all Jewish male babies cast into the Nile. That's when Moses was set adrift in a waterproof basket and was rescued by the Pharaoh's daughter, to grow up in the palace.

Moses, who never forgot he was a Jew, belted an anti-Semite and had to go into hiding. He married the daughter of a Priest and became a sheep grazer.

One day near Mr. Sinai, a voice from a burning bush commanded Moses to set the children of Israel free. Moses tried to reason with Pharaoh but it was no use. Strong measures were needed. A plague brought death to every first-born Egyptian. Pharaoh was glad then to get rid of the Hebrews, who took off in a hurry. Three days later, Pharaoh changed his mind and set out after the Jews with the Egyptian army. The Israelites practically had to eat on the march as for prepared food didn't have time to let the dough rise so the short-baked bread came out unleavened - now known as matzoths.

Then came the incident at the Red Sea where the waters parted to let the Hebrews across, only to come together again to drown the Egyptians. After 40 years of wandering, the Israelites settled in Canaan, the Promised Land beyond the Jordan River. But Moses never got there.

It was God's will that Moses should get a look at the Promised Land from Mt. Pisgah before he died of old age. Exactly when Moses received the Ten Commandments from God is not clearly identified. Our belief is that Moses was in constant touch with God and all liturgical law was promulgated through him. From the Ten Commandments came all accepted criminal codes and mandates of human ethics practiced in civilized countries.

Leo Tolstoi, the Russian novelist, and philosopher who died in 1910, came up with several answers to the question: "What is a Jew?" Some of his responses are appropriately significant to the story of Passover.

He wrote: "Let us see what kind of peculiar creature the Jew is, which all the rulers and all nations have together and separately abused and molested, oppressed and persecuted, trampled and butchered, burned and hanged - and in spite of all this he is yet alive."

"The Jew is the religious source, spring and fountain out of which all the rest of the peoples have drawn their beliefs and their religions."

"The Jew is the pioneer of liberty. The Jew is the pioneer of civilization. Ignorance was condemned in olden Palestine more even than it is today in civilized Europe."

"The Jew is an emblem of civil and religious toleration," wrote Tolstoi, who went on to quote Moses in remote and savage times when the principal ambition of the nations consisted of crushing and enslaving one another: "Love the stranger, Moses commands, "Because you have been stranger in the land of Egypt."

"The Jew is the emblem of eternity," wrote Tolstoi, who continued, "He whom neither fire nor sword nor inquisition was able to wipe off from the face of the earth, he who was the first to produce the oracles of God, he who has been for long the guardian of prophesy, and who transmitted it to the rest of the world - such a nation cannot be destroyed. The Jew is everlasting as is eternity itself."

After reading the writings of Tolstoi, who authored "War and Peace," "Anna Karenina," and other monumental works, you kind of get the unequivocal, indisputable feeling that the Jewish religion is here to stay. Let's keep it that way no matter how you celebrate Passover.

Incidentally, Tolstoi was not Jewish.

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