

Indestructible Jews

BY MAX I. DIMONT
(CONTINUED)

We can state categorically that if not for the Diaspora, the Jews would have become an extinct people like other peoples who lived and died with their own states. I need not recite the long drum call of vanished peoples, states, and civilizations. The Diaspora not only saved the Jews from extinction, but it also placed them in the midst of history. Because of the Diaspora, the Jews did not die culturally when a host civilization died. There were always other Jews in other civilizations to give perpetuity to the Jewish heritage. For the Jews, the Diaspora was and is their escape hatch from cultural death.

Twice in history the Jews were exiled from their homeland -- once at the hands of the Babylonians and again at the hand of Romans. Each time it was the Diaspora Jews who not only preserved Judaism in exile, but who eventually also restored the Jewish state. The leaders who restored the Kingdom of Judah in the fifth century B.C. -- Shezbazzer, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Ezra, Nehemia -- were all born in the Babylonian Diaspora. The Zionist leaders who restored the State of Israel in the Modern Age -- Herzl, Ussishkin, Weizmann, Jabotinsky, Ben-Gurion -- to mention but a few . . . were all born in the European Diaspora. Without the Diaspora to preserve a reservoir of Jews, there would have been no Jews 2,500 years ago or today to rebuild

the ancient homeland into an independent state. Do these events hold a meaning for the Jews in the future? If all Jews in the Diaspora were to emigrate to Israel, could they survive forever within fixed geographic boundaries? If someday, God forbid . . . a military calamity were to disperse the Jews once again from their land, what would happen if there were no Diaspora to absorb the new exiles? What would happen if there were no Diaspora from which to start again?

If the Jews were to liquidate their Diaspora and bind the fate of Judaism to one geographic location, would not the Jews also perish as all other nations have after strutting a few brief centuries on the stage of history? Would the Jews then not also stagnate and die? If the Jews were to give up the Diaspora, the one physical condition which differentiates Jewish history from that of all other nations, could they continue to count on being exempt from the normal historical process of decay and death?

It is my contention that the Jews must continue to cultivate their Diaspora. If they choose to reaffirm their past and fulfill their destiny, they must enter the third act of their history with a Jewish humanist citadel in Israel and Jewish ideological outposts in the Diaspora. Each must nurture the other, because each is dependent on the other. Not only that, it is my contention that the world needs both -- the world needs the Jewish State of Israel and it needs the Jewish Diaspora.

Judaism may now be performing an essential function in the development of both a universal religion and a universal Diaspora for a new world citizen. With the Space Age, the national state

is becoming obsolete. We can foresee the formation of new, more meaningful states, for which the Jewish Diaspora has already established a pattern.

Is this far-fetched? Let us consider three stages in the development of man from the dawn of prehistory to the present -- one past, one vanishing, and a third emerging.

In the first stage, that of precivilization, we see man as a foodgathering hunter, following the wild game. He is a rootless man, living within no geographic boundaries. The earth was his home.

With the dawn of civilization, man enters his second stage, the agricultural phase, which in time ties him to individual parcels of land. These parcels of land grew with time into villages, then into cities, then into provinces, then into nations, and finally into empires. All these units are based on geography.

With the present Space Age, we see a third stage emerging. In this new society, technological wonders create new loyalties that exceed those of national interest.

Industrialization is freeing man from the soil. In a sense this has again made him rootless. Technology, not man produces the world's food today. Instead of following the wild game, instead of being tied to a plot of land to eke out his daily bread, man now follows the machines as they create work for him. The Common Market of Europe has taken Italians to France and Germany. The world economy is taking Americans to China, Japanese to America, and vice versa. Industrialization is taking the Kalmyks to the Crimea and the Tibetans to Siberia.

We are witnessing the biggest population scramble in the history of man. These new migratory waves are setting new fluid population patterns. The world is becoming one vast "diaspora" for man. In fact, man himself is on his way to becoming diasporized.

If the Space Age renders national slogans meaningless, then the new diasporized man living in a diasporized world will be compelled to search for a new ideology that will give his life a new meaning for his new existence.

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