

The State As Hangman

By ROBERT E. SEGAL

Cain slew Abel, and the highest Judge of all was so angry that He banned Cain from the soil. He went further. He sentenced Cain to "become a ceaseless wanderer on earth."

But He didn't go so far as to institute capital punishment. That came later. But even though Biblical law mandated the death penalty for witchcraft, the desecration of the Sabbath and many other offenses, so highly was life valued that the death sentence was put aside by Jews in the First

Century.

Today, terrorism, war, kidnapping, hijacking, and other forms of violence impinge upon peaceful lives to such a degree that capital punishment is a part of the legal process in 37 of America's 50 states where nearly 1200 persons populate Death Row. The Eighth Amendment prohibits cruel and unusual punishment. But guns are easy to obtain, and accounts of murder scream almost daily from newspaper headlines.

Efforts to stay the executioner's hand lead to months and years of appeals to courts and governors. At the highest court level, Associate Justice Lewis F. Powell, Jr., crying out against such a slow pace set on the crawl to the eventual dispatch of lives of the convicted, recently sounded a stern warning. He said that unless the judicial system can find a more efficient way to handle death penalty appeals, the states should abolish capital punishment.

Do the appeals bring reversals? Yes, in the past seven years, 73 percent of 41 cases appealed have been decided in favor of those condemned to die.

Meanwhile the American prison population, now 400,000 has doubled since 1970; and the courts are clogged with cases pending. Meanwhile also, a Harris poll indicates that 68 percent of those Americans questioned favor capital punishment in contrast to a score of 42 percent in 1966.

Six men have been put to death in the United States since 1977 when the Supreme Court voted to permit the resumption of state executions. In days gone by, the hangman's noose brought death to the convicted; then came the age of the electric chair, whimsically referred to as "Old Sparky" in Sing Sing. And now the era of execution by the injection of a lethal dose of sodium thiopental is prescribed by some legislatures. This makes the doctor an unwilling high executioner; and it is not surprising that the American Medical Association officially opposes placing this burden on a medic's conscience.

Around the complex issue of capital punishment, the ancient debate over the power of state execution as a deterrent to potential killers continues to boil. Let study after study disprove the claim that a lethal potion in the arm of one condemned stems the tide of murder, and those convinced otherwise continue to claim that court-mandated death is in the commonwealth's best interest. As Bill Buckley puts it: "If it could be absolutely determined that there was no deterrent factor, I'd still be in favor of capital punishment." Somewhat like-minded, Rev. Jerry Falwell, chief spokesman for Moral Majority, says Jesus favored the death penalty as evidenced by the fact that he could have spoken up but did not.

Many in our own times do speak up though. In 1980, a vote on capital punishment found 145 Roman Catholic bishops in America opposed and only 31 in favor. In January, 1983, Pope John Paul II became the first Pope in history to criticize the death penalty.

A coalition of civic leaders, rabbis, ministers, civil liberties advocates, academicians, and others continue bravely to champion campaign against execution by the state. Governor Cuomo of New York has vetoed capital punishment legislation; and in Massachusetts, where the shameful miscarriage of justice in the Sacco-Vanzetti executions still haunts legislative halls, Governor Dukakis is seeking repeal of the Bay State's new capital punishment mandate.

This observer notes with sadness that a 1981 sampling of Jewish opinion showed 72 percent of those questioned did not want the abolition of the death penalty. The fears and anxieties of those so minded are understandable in this era of violence. Yet, the Jewish centuries-old respect for human life and the example set by ancient judges in Israel, who, with a passion for justice, found ways to circumvent mandated capital punishment, are unforgettable and not to be forsaken by many of us.

Technion-Israel Awards 1983 Harvey Prize

HAIFA — Professor Robert Aumann, a leading figure in mathematical economics and game theory and Professor Philip Leder, a pioneer in the field of molecular biology, have been awarded the 1983 Harvey Prize of the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology at ceremonies on the Institute's Haifa campus.

Professor Robert J. Aumann, who has served in the Mathematics Department of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem since 1956, was bestowed the prize in the field of Science and Technology for his contributions in analyzing the complexities of an economic market involving many traders. By postulating a "continuum" of participants, Professor Aumann was able to utilize the tools of continuous mathematics in describing interactive decision making in an economic arena.

Professor Philip Leder, head of the Department of Genetics at Harvard Medical School in Cambridge, Massachusetts since 1981, received the Harvey prize in Human Health "in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the field of molecular genetics through the development of novel methods of analysis of gene structure and function." Dr. Leder's work has focused on the genes which encode for the structure of antibodies — the body's main defender against infection.

The Harvey Prize Fund was established by the late Leo M. Harvey of Los Angeles, Calif. to recognize major contributions toward human progress in one or more of four fields: Science and Technology, Human Health, Literature of Profound Insight into the Life and People's of the Middle East, and the Advancement of Peace in the Middle East. Each prize bears a cash award of \$35,000. Past recipients of the Harvey Prize include Professor Freeman John Dyson for his work in theoretical physics, and Gershon Scholem for his studies of Jewish mysticism.

The Technion is Israel's most comprehensive academic resource for the research and development of innovative technologies. Over 70 percent of the engineers and scientists working in Israel are Technion graduates.

Summer Program Sends Record Number To Israel

Masada Israel Summer Programs has concluded the most successful program recruitment drive in its 21 year history. 460 young men and women aged 13 - 23 are now spending six stirring weeks experiencing the length and breadth of Israel. This is the third consecutive year of record-breaking enrollment for the program. The increase is largely attributed to the enthusiastic recommendations of previous participants.

Seven different Masada programs offer a wide range of tours. Included are: Teenage

Camp (13-14 year old), Teenage Tour (15-17), Leadership Training Course (16-18), a program that includes two weeks of training in either tennis, soccer, track, or water sports, Garin Program (16-19), for those who have been to Israel before, Summer in Moshav (18-23) which includes a two week Moshav work experience, and Masada Student Tour (18-23).

"Our programs whet one's appetite for Israel and Jewish identity," notes Alleck A. Resnick, ZOA National President. "They are an excellent way to turn young Jews on, so that they don't turn Judaism off," he continued.

During the coming year, Masada plans to initiate a special scholarship program for public high school students of Hebrew. Winners of a competition being developed by the Board of Jewish Education and the New York Board of Education will receive a Masada trip of their choice.

For further information regarding any of Masada's programs, contact: Isaac Lakritz, ZOA National Youth Director, or Amir Peled, Central Shaliach, 4 East 34th Street, New York, N.Y. 10016 (212) 481-1487.

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