

DENNIS PRAGER ADDRESSES AFRICAN-AMERICAN LEADERS AT TEMPLE BETH SHOLOM — PART II

By Muhammad Abdullah

The following are excerpts from Dennis Prager's address recently at Temple Beth Shalom on Friday, April 10, 1992. Among Prager's social contributions as stated in last week's article is the development of the MICAH Center For Ethical Monotheism in Los Angeles. The center's philosophy is based on the following words as stated by the Prophet Micah, the center's namesake which state, "Oh man God has told what is good and what God demands of you - only that you act justly, love goodness and walk humbly with your God." Prager's views also can be read in his quarterly journal entitled "Ultimate Issues" in which he espouses articles on numerous conventional, contemporary and modern issues facing Jews and humanity at large.

In concluding his brief speech Prager offered some challenges to Christians, Jews and Muslims on the topic of Race Relations. His delivery was provocative and timely in light of the recent setbacks experienced by African-Americans, minorities and other in civil rights enforcement in America.

"I wish that there were no such thing as Black/Jewish relations. Let me make something clear before I explain that. I stand here only as one Jew. I am not speaking on behalf of 6 million American Jews or 13 million Jews worldwide. I do not speak on behalf of any Jewish organization. This is not official statements of a Jewish group or the Jewish community. In that regard, there will be things said that many Jews may disagree with what I have to say, I suspect."

"Point number one, I don't like the subject. How come there is no Jew anywhere in the world speaking on "White/Jewish Relations?" Because most Jews are white? That's the obvious answer. That's a very unfortu-

nate part of what I want to say.

If that choir had two or three Blacks in it, or if this synagogue had 20% - I believe that that is the percentage of Blacks in America. If this synagogue was 15 to 20% Black membership, this topic wouldn't even exist!

In Israel, the topic doesn't exist. Who are the Ethiopian Jews? Martians? That's the beauty of it. This should have never come about. It has come about because we are "too ethnic" and "too insular."

Many Blacks thought that it was important to say no to Christianity because they felt it was Christians that enslaved them in America. So they didn't want the religion, (some of them, a small minority,) but an important minority, did not want to associate with the religion of their slave masters. Why of all things did they not take Judaism. Jews were the least involved. Jews were involved in every endeavor in the world from making you, to selling slaves, to fighting slavery, to being on the left, to being on the right. The whole idea of saying "Jews this" and "Jews that" is not true. Jews are too different. Blacks are too different. That's why I don't like the subject. I am uncomfortable with this subject. What do you mean Black-Jewish Relations?

If Jews has said originally to Blacks as well as whites who were not born Jewish, "If you do not have a church, or if you have left the religion of your youth, consider us, consider Judaism," half of this problem would not have arisen. It would have never come about!

As I have said, as long as I am speaking publicly, the only Jewish answer to the statement "Your daughter is dating a Black," should be; "Oh, is he Jewish?" That is the only permitted Jewish answer. Any other answer is anti-Black, is racist, and is anti-Semitic. It is anti-Jewish! That is the way that we have to start thinking.

Judaism is not a race, Jews is not a race. There are white Jews, there are Black Jews. Did you ever see the Israel army. If the Israeli army switched places with the United Nations Peace Keeping Force, you would not know which was which. It is not possible to know. There are red-headed Jews, there are Black Jews, in many cases they are more African than most Black Americans. Pure African! From Africa Thank God for them.

I truly believe that Ethiopian Jews are one of the great blessings of Jewish life. To "de-ethnicize" and "de-racialize" Judaism both in Jews eyes and in non-Jewish eyes. I pray in front of the Torah. I pray for the day when the subject of Black/Jewish Relations is greeted with the response, "Huh?," "What?," "What do you mean Black/Jewish relations?" How do you relate to yourself? Just as White/Jewish relations will become an absurdity, Black/Jewish relations will become an absurdity. That is the most important thing that I can leave you with. That is the way that we have to start to think. There should be plenty of Black Jews. Plenty. So that the idea doesn't arise that there would be a rift. You can't have a rift with a group with which you are a member.

In so far as there are separate groups there should be a

bond between Blacks and Jews specifically in America that would strike me that would be uniquely close. If any two groups that should have the closest emotional bond, it should be Blacks and Jews. Because we have the bond of suffering.

The issue of "who suffered more is so preposterous. Who is there exactly that can compare? The Jew who went to the gas chamber to the black that was lynched? Which one do you compare? How long it took to die from asphyxiation from the tree or from asphyxiation from the gas chamber? What are you going to compare? The wrecking of millions and millions of Black lives or the destruction of millions and millions of Jewish lives.

I beg people on my radio program and I don't beg easily. I beg of you whatever your background. Please read one book on the "Holocaust" and read one book on slavery of American Blacks. You will never be the same! When you know what people did, not crazy people. Not sick people. The Nazi's weren't sick people. The enslavers of Blacks weren't sick people.

Normal people, grabbed people in the millions and put them like animals, in fact they had never treated animals the way that they treated Black

people; packed them in ships; read about it. You will never see humanity quite the same after you read a real book on slavery. You will never see humanity quite the same after you read one book on the Holocaust.

Every Jew should have a book on slavery. Every Black should have a book on the Holocaust. When you know what suffering is and historical suffering doesn't leave you. If any people should know what Blacks went through in slavery it is us Jews. We are the best at memory.

But look how long ago slavery was? My friends, we fast on Tishabab for something that happened 2000 years ago. And before that was 2,600 years ago.

I'll never forget a woman called my show and asked, "Why don't you Jews forgive and forget about the Holocaust?" I said to her, first of all, I can't forgive the Holocaust because I wasn't

there. I wasn't one of the people who were hurting, and many were hurting. That ends the forgive part.

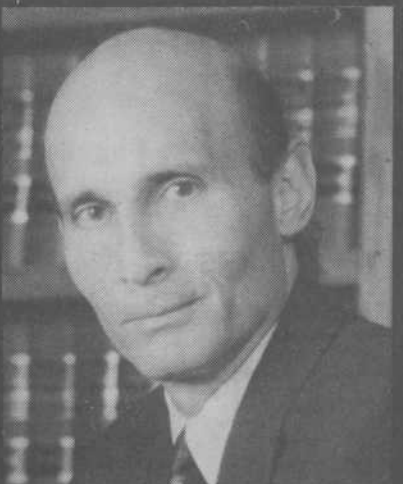
Now for the "forget" part. Jews, every August, sit around and Basque the whole day over the destruction of the Jewish Commonwealth that happen destruction of the Jewish Commonwealth that happened in 586 BC. So I tell you what, call up 2500 years from now and we'll discuss forgetting the Holocaust.

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