

The Self-conviction in God's Selection - A Fading Myth

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National affiliation usually combines citizens sharing a common territory, ethnicity, or religious customs, although in the modern era some large nations are composed of a mixture of different people (the United States of America), or those united by an iron fist of a totalitarian regime (e.g., The Russian Republic; the People's Republic of China). Ancient nations, in comparison, preserve their national feelings due mostly to common historical background (e.g., India; Persia; Israel). Notably, while most empires in the history of humanity were successful for only limited durations and finally dissipated when destroyed by other increasing powers, the survival history of the Jewish nation is particularly peculiar. The Hebrews (Israelites) originated approximately 4000 years ago with the patriarch Abraham, who allegedly established a covenant with God, that was later confirmed in a written form (the Torah that included the 'Ten Commandments' and all laws) brought down by the prophet Moses after his ostensible 'meeting with God' ('Revelation') on mount Sinai (approximately 3320 years ago; ref. 1). Although the Jews outlasted despite being most of their history in exile after destruction of their homeland by empires like Assyria, Aram, Babylon, Greece, Byzantine, and Rome, they still maintained their nationality and belief in a single abstractive God, quite early in the history of human civilization, with the 'national fathers' (Abraham, Issac, and Jacob) and 'mothers' (Sarah, Rebeca, Lea and Rachel). The Hebrew nation was then constituted from the twelve tribes, originally Jacob's children, united by their religion and belief in the abstractive God (Yahweh), the creator of the world (ref. 2). This belief, establishing the first monotheistic religion in human development, was ratified upon their escape from slavery in Egypt and the journey to the promised land (Canaan; today's Israel) with Moses and Joshua leading. Not only that Moses united the Israelites under a common desire for freedom and aspiration to reach the land promised to Abraham (Canaan), he also convinced the people that they were 'chosen' by God, thus providing a divine approval to their asserted uniqueness while strengthening their national affiliation. Moreover, this declaration was engraved 'formally' in the Torah, a written format believed to be prepared by Moses on Mount Sinai. Yet, without any proof, the Torah could have been written later in time by diligent writers, clever enough to establish an undetachable bond between the people and their alleged God (ref. 3). Thus, the exceptional survival history of the Jewish nation did not depend on a large strong population, considerable economic potential, or military strength, but on a cognitive conviction raised most likely by cunning writers, who united them under a common idea that added a perpetual strength to their national identity. So deep was the cognitive conviction, that Jews along history were ready to sacrifice their life during periodical pogroms and not to convert to Christianity or Islam, the two other monotheistic religions established much later in time. This may seem strange considering that God in the three monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) is the same unattainable abstractive

being (Yahweh-Lord-Allah), while differing in the belief in his messengers or prophets, and in the customs and rituals raised for praising his greatness. Therefore, the tenacious behavior and heroic obstinacy of the Jews along history are most probably associated with an ultimate faith in their religious habits rather than in God himself.

Another peculiarity of the Jewish people was the immense educational motivation, leading to the expression “The Book Nation”, as every small child learned reading and writing while their environment of grown-up non-Jewish neighbors were quite ignorant. No wonder then that for several millennia, the Jewish nation was considered superior in scholastic skills and cognitive capabilities, which further fueled the hatred of their opponents. However, while most other nations have advanced ever since in all aspects of modern life, the orthodox Jews, even those living freely since 1948 in Israel, preserved their poor life-style adopted in exile including their archaic dressing. This cultural and economic stagnation, accompanied by continuous financial blackmailing of the Israeli state (for living expenses), and negligible contribution of man-power to the economy or army service (arguing that they are too busy in learning the Torah), increased the contempt, actually hatred, by the non-religious population. So and quite ironically, from being considered most educated nation, the scholastic values and alleged superiority have declined, and the rising polarity between the orthodox Jews and the rest of the population has reached extremes that endanger Israel’s future as a modern independent state (ref. 4).

Thus, the self-conviction of being selected by God, that was probably the ‘unifying glue’ of the Israelites, while endorsing their preeminent feelings under the wings of a monotheistic religion, is fading out. The conviction in superiority was most likely among the main reasons of the rising hatred Jews had experienced ever since (Antisemitism; ref. 5). It seems, though, that despite the genuine claim about ‘the chosen nation’, a key factor in their survival during approximately 4000 years (without an independent homeland or military strength), it is being refuted in recent years as evident from the chaos developed in Israel (under Netanyahu’s ludicrous regime) primarily due to the customary religious stagnation, suggesting that this national myth lost reliability.

References

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