

EASTER

My plan was to place the times of discontent in the perspective of the current situation, portend for the Jew and Israel, so often forsaken in the Mideast and elsewhere to include the United Nations and was reminded that today is Easter: the Christian festival to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus. Like Christmas a time of gifts-there will be many Easter Egg hunts and activities. Holidays seem to dwarf the origin for the good times. So let us ruminate on Easter in the perspective of the Jew, Christian and Moslem.

Perhaps in our naïvete, time and distance from the rumblings in much of the mideast and North Africa and the hope and change of our Administration will inspire democratic reform, rather than militant Islamic Jihad, we wait and wonder.

Remember a Jew is one who accepts the faith of Judaism without formal affiliation (ethics, folkways, literature)-hence a cultural definition. One calling himself a Jew is a practical definition while others call Judaism a civilization, and that Jews are not a race, but a way of life: the words of Rabbi Morris Kertzer, 'What is a Jew'.

The Jew and Christian both believe that man was placed on earth for a purpose, rather than a 'brilliant interlude between two nothings'; share the rich heritage of the Old Testament with its timeless truths, unchanging values, a belief in one God, knowing, powerful and merciful-the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Ten Commandments, wisdom of the prophets and the brotherhood of man. Jews do not accept the divinity of Jesus as 'the only begotten son of God', but recognize him as a child of God, spiritually; rejecting incarnation(that God became flesh as Jesus). This early argument of Jesus as God, rather than another Prophet became the seed of universal hatred to many and was tantamount in early religious times when Constantine established Christianity as doctrine for the Romans.

It was said Jews and Christians were scandalized when a prophet arose in Arabia during the 7th

century who claimed to have received direct revelation from their God(al-Lah)and brought a new scripture to his people, the Qu-ran. Before there was religious trek to Mecca called the Hajj at Kabah, a shrine for prayer. It was, according to scholars, during one of these treks Mohammed received through the angel, Gabriel-how God communicates with man-as a revelation. Like the Jewish prophets in something called kaddosh, Mohammed feared death in this revelation. Both belied the Jesus story but accepted him as a divine prophet and early-on there was commiseration. Abraham seed for Isaac and Ishmael(jew and arab)was part of the mix. Scripture by Mohammed(Qu-ran)was piecemeal over time whereas Moses received Old Testament scripture on Mount Sinai in one revelation.

As Islam grew reaching out in voice and action much like the conflict in Christianity over Jesus as God or prophet, Mohammed, in absentia, suffered the fate of conflict: Shiiah-the hereditary rationale as opposed to Sunni whose scholars recanted heredity for orthodox development and evidence. And the irony is unequivocal as the three religions/ideology prepare a basis for accommodation in their belief in one God, perhaps the same God.

Geza Vermes (an authority on Judaism in the age of Jesus)in his book: 'The Resurrection' accepts Jesus as a real person who was arrested, tried and crucified and via known astronomical data the most likely date: Friday, 7 April, AD 30 , the eve of Passover full moon. Thus, the conviction in the spiritual presence of the living Jesus account for the resurgence of the Jesus movement after crucifixion, yet it was St Paul's doctrinal skill that allowed nascent Christianity to grow- a Resurrection centered world religion.

Imagine a table to be set for the reconciliation and debate –in good faith-between Moses, Jesus and Mohammed. Unfortunately the aura of this event would be undoubtedly changed when 'Fools rush in where wise men fear to tread'. And so it goes.

