

JACK TELL'S NEWSPAPER

LAS VEGAS ISRAELITE
OF NEVADA

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TELL TALES
"One Man Plus The Truth
Constitutes A Majority"

BY JACK TELL



Christmas Message

This week the citizens of many nations will pause to observe the yocous rite of Christmas. To most of us, it is an occasion of deep spiritual significance. It commemorates the birth of one whose wisdom and tolerance ennobled all mankind and thereby altered the course of civilization.

Traditionally, the Christmas season symbolizes the spirit of goodwill and understanding among peoples of all faiths. It is a time when the tapestry of family life is more closely woven, but it is also a time when the hand of friendship is extended to the stranger.

All of us are the proud inheritors of a strong and prosperous land. There is much for which we may be grateful on the eve of this 1965 Christmas observance. We are moving ever closer to our dream of a society in which poverty, hunger and despair do not exist, and in which all men enjoy true equality, in the eyes of their fellow men as well as in the eyes of the law.

These are goals which have not changed since the dawn of civilization. Our nation is commissioned by his-

tory to be either an observer of freedom's failure or the cause of its success.

Freedom does not come free. We must work, sacrifice and make investments of time, money, and even lives to preserve and strengthen it.

This is the reason why more than 165,000 young Americans will observe Christmas in the battle-torn jungles of Viet Nam, where death is a constant companion.

To these guardians of freedom the most precious Christmas gift will be the gift of life.

Such sacrifices enable us to dwell in a citadel of freedom, a society where horizons are without limit or restriction. It is entirely appropriate, therefore, that we remember them at a time when the world pauses for a most solemn observance and renews its commitment to the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God.

On behalf of my family and the employees of the state, I would like to extend a most cordial holiday greeting to all the citizens of Nevada.

U.S.Y. YOURS

by Jan Klein

December 19 was the USY Latke Luncheon. USY would like to thank all the mothers who helped in the kitchen—those latkes were great! There was an interesting program, too; a reading, "The Jewbird", about anti-semitism among Jews, a discussion of the story, and then Israeli singing and dancing and ruach in general.

Don't miss our New Year's Dance on January 1 from 8:00 to 11:00 p.m. It will be held in the Danny Kolod Youth Center, with music by the Uncalled-for's. All paid-up members will be admitted free, everyone else, 50cents each, and dues (\$5.00) are payable at the door.

Las Vegas USY received very honorable mention at the regional board meeting in Los Angeles, December 12.

There will be a membership meeting December 26

in the Youth House at 7:00 p.m. An interesting program has been planned, and there may be a few surprises. Be sure not to forget!

This week several USY-er's from Far West Region are attending National Convention in Washington D.C. Robbie Rome, who is treasurer of our region and a member of Westchester USY, is running for national corresponding secretary.

Las Vegas USY has been planning many affairs for 1966. Among them are a Purim Carnival, a raffle, a bake sale, a Lag B'Omer picnic, and some great programs for our membership meetings, too.

The word is out that chapter sweatshirts and a chapter song are being worked on. Nu??

Hope your Hanukah was a happy one.

perpetuate rather than the arid nationalism and the military powers of the Hashmonean Dynasty.

The struggle of the Maccabees was more than one of national survival. It was a clash between two civilizations, the Hebraic and the Hellenistic. The Syrians were well entrenched, they had the best arms of the day; the swiftest horses, the sharpest spears and the strongest chariots. Yet a nucleus of inspired men, untrained, unarmed, weak, drove the Syrians out of the Holy Land. "Probably history offers no parallel," wrote an eminent English non-Jewish historian, "to the undaunted courage with which such a band dared to face death, one by one in the maintenance of a holy cause." The Maccabees risked their lives for Israel's Torah that had been defiled by the abominations of their oppressors. They had overcome their foes by the power of the spirit of faith during a three-year struggle and had triumphed by their dauntless courage. Nonetheless our Sages were reluctant to over emphasize the military aspects of the war. The ideal of our rabbis was that humanity should not fight and live by the sword but by the words of God.

The miracle of the oil was an expression of the faith which inspired and dominated the aged Mattathias, founder of the dynasty who made his immortal stand at Modin. Proudly and fearlessly he declared: "Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall away everyone from the religion of their fathers, yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. Whosoever is zealous for the law, and maintaineth the Covenant, let him follow me," a declaration not often remembered much less practiced by his descendants.

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tunate has developed into the indiscriminate giving and receiving of gifts. The once simple recreation of one's version of the Crib has developed into addenda like trees, holly wreaths, tinsel and lights.

An occasion that was originally celebrated by just those of the Christian faith, now finds other sects, religious and beliefs looking forward to and rejoicing in the spirit of Christmas.

The metamorphosis of Christmas was not a straight, smooth road from the way it was, to what it is. There were bypaths, drawbacks, tangents and obstacles created by the natural course of history through the ages.

While Santa Claus is obviously a result of creative imagination, the thought was derived from and patterned after a real, historical person. During the 4th century, Nicholas, an eight year old orphan, but independently wealthy, spent his life being kind and generous to the less fortunate in his native town in Asia Minor. He was elevated to Bishop of Myra and in the 9th century was canonized. His Dutch name was Santa Claus.

The furthest reference to a Christmas tree is a legendary story of a wounded Swedish officer being cared for by the people of Leipsig during the 30 Years War in the 17th century. As an offer of gratitude, he set up a lighted tree in a church on Christmas Day.

The Christmas tree was introduced to America in 1747 by Germans settling in Pennsylvania. Five years later the Moravian sect decorated their trees with lighted candles. Catholic and Protestant colonists from Holland introduced the annual St. Nicholas visitation to America.

Early colonists were divided in the recognition of December 25th. Members of Church of England, Dutch Reformed, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian and certain German sects honored the holiday. Quakers, Baptists, Presbyterians and Puritans ignored the date. It was on the night of December 25, 1776, George Washington crossed the Delaware River to defeat the Hessians celebrating Christmas at Trenton.

Fantasy had Santa arriving in a cart, a wagon, on mule, drawn by goats and other means of transportation until Clement Moore's "A Visit From St. Nicholas" in 1822, and thereafter the popular conception was a sled drawn by reindeer. In 1847, the first classroom Christmas tree was decorated in a New York City Episcopalian Sunday School.

The individual states commenced declaring Christmas a legal holiday. Alabama, which, like all southern states celebrated Dec. 25 with fireworks a la Fourth of July, was the first, in 1836, and the rest followed suit; California, 1851; Nevada, 1861; Utah, 1882; etc., with Oklahoma being last in 1890.

As late as 1855, all religions were still not in accord in their tolerance of the holiday. The Dec. 26 edition of that year's New York Times stated: Churches of Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists were not open yesterday. They do not accept the day as Holy one, but Episcopalian, Catholic and German churches were open. Inside they were decked with evergreens. However, by 1880, all evangelical churches were accepting Christmas.

Passing of Christmas gifts in those days was not emphasized, except the wealthy were expected to be generous to the poor. In the middle of the 19th century, due to the influence of Charles Dickens' writings, singing of Christmas carols became prevalent, and the sending of cards began in 1875.

The classic editorial which began, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus," in response to a child's query, was written by Francis Church for the New York Sun of Dec. 21st, 1897.

In recent years Santa Claus has become to be known as a communal folk figure. A Pennsylvania judge ruled in 1936, that any doubters of Santa Claus who appeared before him would be held in contempt of court. The court citation read: Santa is not a figment of the imagination but an actuality. He is the symbol of kindness, a token of smiling charity and a badge of all that is cheerfully benevolent.

Commercial exploitation of Christmas has become systematic and thorough, impelling Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopalians and Jews, to band together in Milwaukee in 1949 and decree to put Christ back into Christmas.

Today Jehovah's Witnesses and members of the Christian Science faith oppose the tree, festive lights and Santa and other secularization of the holiday. But they have deep reverence for the religious observance.

Meanwhile millions of non-Christian homes in scores of non-Christian countries, including Japan and India, have taken unto their own the kindness and charity and cheer of Christmas and proudly display decorated and lit trees on December 25th.

All this proves the true sense of Christmas has not waned — its just that the Spirit of Christmas has overwhelmed and is about to inundate all humans in the four corners of the earth.

Editorial

Meaning of Hanukkah

The tier of eastern states recently saw a rival of a great institution—the candle.

Thirty million people, thrown into darkness by an electric power blackout, turned to the candle to show the way.

Is there no lesson in this?

Electricity is a great giant of power, but all giants have a proneness to special weaknesses. Their very strength may defeat them in the end. Better is the candle. It is an humble, little thing. Scarcely a few inches, its glimmer is but a passing shadow. Yet, in the last analysis, it is a better friend and more dependable.

We light in this season our Chanukah candles to recall a story which preaches the same lesson. The enemy of the Jews was a giant, a great powerful dictator, Antiochus Epiphenes, who regarded himself as a god who had made his name feared in all of Asia Minor. Israel, he boasted, would grovel at his feet.

His hand was imperiously stretched out—first to annihilate the Jewish faith and then to exterminate the Jewish people. He seemed all powerful, and certainly had no doubt of it himself. His attitude toward the Judeans was one of contempt.

All of Judaea was thrown into darkness, in a blackout in which there was not a ray of light, when suddenly a little candle shone on the horizon.

In the little town of Modin one family of priests, Mattathias, arose and unfurled the Maccabean banner.

One candle lights another, says the Talmud, and the light that was in Modin lit spirits in men elsewhere and the uprising took on radiant shape.

The mighty, as we say in the Chanukah prayer, were given in the hands of the weak, the many in the hands of the few.

This is the meaning of Chanukah.

Why Hanukkah?

Rabbi H. Rabinowicz

To the rhetorical question, "What is the reason for Chanukah," the Talmud replies: "When the Greeks entered the Temple, and they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hashmonean dynasty prevailed against them and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest but which contained sufficient oil for one day's light only; yet a miracle was wrought therein and they lit (the lamp) therewith for eight days. The following year these days were appointed a festival with the recital of Hallel and thanksgiving."

It is significant that this "Miracle of the Oil," is not mentioned in any other source. The Book of Maccabees merely remarks: "And all the people fell upon their faces, and worshipped and gave praise unto heaven which had given them good success. And they kept the dedication of the Altar eight days and offered burnt offerings with gladness and sacrificed a sacrifice of deliverance and praise.. And there was exceeding great gladness among the people, and the reproach of the Gentiles was turned away."

The historian Flavius Josephus (37-105 A.C.E.) similarly comments: "Now Judas celebrated the festival of the restoration of the sacrifices of the Temple for eight days; and omitted no sort of pleasure thereon; but he feasted them upon very rich and splendid sacrifices; and he honored God, and delighted them by hymns and psalms. Nay, they were so very glad at the revival of their customs, when after a long time of intermission they unexpectedly had regained the freedom of their worship, that they made it law for their posterity, that they should keep a festival, on account of the restoration of their temple worship for eight days. And from that time we celebrate this festival and call it lights." Moreover, the Al-Hanissim prayer already found in the Siddur of Rabbi Amram Caon (2nd half of the 9th century) states: "thou deliverest the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the arrogant into the hands of them that occupied themselves with thy law... And thereupon thy children came into thy most holy house, cleansed thy temple, purified thy sanctuary, kindled lights in thy holy courts, and appointed these eight days of Chanukah in order to give thanks and praises unto thy great name."

When the foe decimated the population of Palestine, the Rabbis were at pains to stress and reassess the eternal and indestructible spiritual values of Judaism. They asserted that the ultimate victory belongs not to those who come with the facts of might but to those who come with the Eternal spirit of God. "Not by might, nor by power but by My spirit," was the idea that the Rabbis endeavored to