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Rosh Hashanah

By JACK SIEGEL

I love Rosh Hashanah. It is a festive day and the beginning of the new year. It abounds in positive statements and is the first day of penitence. It is, traditionally, the day the world began and the time when God is supposed to remember His creatures. We are obviously not cast adrift, we are not alone, because on that day, He passes judgement. This could be a frightening thought but when it is equated with the blowing of the ram's horn, the very moment at which a human being comes closest to himself, it is, too, a positive concept.

Coming closer to oneself is seeing the proper image. This requires some self-criticism. It is not easy but then being a Jew is not easy. If being a Jew were easy, it is conceivable that many non-Jews would become Jews.

The sounds of happiness are echoed in the phrase, "May you be written down in the book of life for a good year." Sometimes, if a Jew is in a hurry, he might elipsize the phrase and simply say "For a good year." And many people will settle for that. It may be terrifying to some to suspect that their destinies are already laid out but that is so unless a man is on a collision course with himself. The bad are blotted out of life forever but those who hover between good and bad have their reprieves until the Day of Atonement, which follows Rosh Hashanah, when a man has time to atone.

There is even something human in the history of its chronology. Rosh Hashanah is typically a time of the Fall. Yet during the Babylonian exile, the Jews adopted a custom of an extra New Year on the 1st of Tishri, the day occurring in the Spring month of Nisan. There is also in the history a controversy on the calendar between Gamaliel II and Joshua. Typical. Two Jews with a third point of view. Much of the tradition arises out of the conditions of the early times. It was possible once to take testimony from witnesses on the proclaiming of the new moon. That settled, messengers were sent through the land. This is not necessary today. The new moon is a general phenomenon and the newspapers will give you the information. It is not solely a Jewish matter.

Nor should the concept of Rosh Hashanah BE solely a Jewish matter. The idea that a new year brings hope and fulfillment, that it calls for a closer look at oneself, at one's faults, at one's sins, is a protocol to be adopted by the broader part of all populations. The concept of redemption, that there is hope to come out of every situation is also one which could be adopted by the general population.

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NEW YEAR FEATURE . . .

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decided to surrender its individuality for the sake of the whole, by ceasing to carry out its specific function and applying its entire energy toward the common functions?

At first it might appear as though the organism might benefit from this decision, but on closer reflection it becomes clear that the result of such an action would lead to disaster for both the particular organ and the organism as a whole. Without exercising its particular function the individual organ would lose its identity and soon atrophy. Eventual loss of the limb would result in injury to the whole body, and might even be fatal, if the organ in question is a vital one.

The analogy can be applied to the individual in his relation with society, to a minority group within a state, and to a nation within the community of nations. It is certainly applicable to us both as a nation and as individual Jews.

The Jewish people, who long ago were described as "the fewest of all people" (Deut. 7.7), is a minority amongst the nations of the world, and the individual Jew, we know, is usually a minority wherever he lives. Even in the midst of his own people, sad to say, there are places where the observant Jew living in accordance with the precepts of the Holy Torah, is also a minority.

What is the specific task of our people and the function of the individual Jew? This would seem more difficult to define than the specific organ functions of the body. Yet, this can be determined by ascertaining those factors that have been essential to the survival of the Jewish people.

A study of our long history will at once illustrate that neither material wealth nor physical might have been the key to our survival. Even during our most prosperous years under the reign of King Solomon, Jewish wealth was insignificant by comparison with that of other contemporary empires such as Egypt and Assyria.

That survival has not been a matter of statehood or homeland is clear from the fact that we have lived in the diaspora for the greatest part of our history.

Neither has language been the essence of our continuity. For a long period Aramaic rather than the Holy Tongue was the spoken language among our people; parts of the Scripture and almost all of the Babylonian and even the Jerusalem Talmud (Gemara) and the Zohar are written in Aramaic. In the days of Saadia and Maimonides, Arabic was the common language for most Jews, while later it was Yiddish and other languages.

Nor was it any common secular culture that has preserved our people, since secular cultures have changed from one period to another.

The single common factor present with the Jews throughout the ages, in all lands and under all circumstances, has been the Torah, which Jews of every era have clung to tenaciously in their daily lives. True, there arose from time to time dissident groups that attempted to break away from Torah Judaism such as

TELL TALES

"One Man Plus The Truth Constitutes A Majority"

BY JACK TELL



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of their names, have played a large part in the ever-increasing sale of Israel Bonds, which reached a high of half a million dollars last year. We hope that figure is topped this year.

Like Jerry Lewis and M.D., Israel Bonds is Greenspun's baby in Southern Nevada, and rather than risk the chance of even the slightest possibility of friction hurting the campaign, we respectfully withdrew from active participation.

But, we state here and now, without qualification, the ardent dedication we have expressed since the advent of the Israelite, some seven years back, for Zionism and the State of Israel, has not diminished one whit.

Israel, now moreso than ever before, needs the overwhelming, total support of all Jews and friends of Jews. We urge all readers to extend themselves to the limit of their financial capacity in the purchase of Israel Bonds. They have been proven through the years to be a sound, solid investment, in addition to the heartfelt warmth and satisfaction achieved by any American in supporting the only Democratic nation in the Middle East, surrounded by Arab, pro-Communist enemies.

It should be noted, monies derived from the sale of Israel Bonds is not allocated to the military defense of that brave, valiant country. Instead, Israel Bond funds are utilized in the development of resources, building of roads, hospitals, educational facilities and all the necessities of internal progress.

The investment funds are required to fill the gap created by staggering costs of defense and security requirements. No matter how serious the military problems, the critical fields of health, employment and housing must be met. Various Charitable organizations raise funds for particular projects, and are doing a splendid job, but Israel Bonds is the largest single source of development finance.

The security of this investment is evident in the perfect record of redemption which the Government of Israel has maintained for the past 20 years. Within 24 hours after your check is received, even before delivery of the bond to you, your money is turned into working capital for Israel's economy.

Israel is facing a crisis right now. She needs your support. Please do your best.

A quote we have heard spoken in the past: "A group as small as ours in Las Vegas cannot be divided in any respect as far as Israel is concerned."

To which we add: "Amen."

the idolatry movement during the First Temple, the Hellenists during the second, Alexandrian assimilationists, Karaites and others, but they all dissipated and disappeared.

It is the Torah and the Mitzvoth that must be recognized as the central core of the Jewish people and hence their essential function. This holds true for the individual Jew and for our people's relationship to humanity.

It follows that the Jew who seeks to imitate the ways of other nations, far from helping to preserve his people, endangers its very existence, and instead of gaining the nations' favor will only intensify their antagonism. Similarly, those Jews who court the favor of non-religious groups by concession and compromise, not only undermine their own existence and that of our people as a whole - for Torah and Mitzvoth are our very life - but they defeat their own aim. For compromise can evoke only derision and contempt, and justifiably so, for a minor concession today leads to a major one tomorrow, and an evasion of duty towards G-d leads to an evasion of duty towards man, and who is to say where this downsliding will stop?

At this time, standing on the threshold of the New Year a time propitious for earnest introspection, I fervently hope that all of us, Jews everywhere, both as individuals and as groups will recognize the truth:

The essential factor of our existence and

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