

Leave Hadassah Alone

By JACK TELL

(Here's the corrected last week column)

Like so many others of our age group, this writer is a second generation American Jew, born and reared in an Orthodox home, steeped in reverence for our Faith and very concerned, like the "Fiddler" show, in the observance and dictates of our tradition.

As a small boy we recall asking questions about certain facets of our Faith. The answers by our elders most often were surrounded with logical explanations. We were told there were two sets of dishes because meat and milk do not mix well when being digested. It sounded reasonable and we accepted the practice without delving further.

The point we are making is that there appears to be logical reasons for our traditions. Of course, among our more devout, tradition is a matter strictly of belief, which is the basic foundation of religion at the inception.

One more point before we discuss the main issue in this piece, the performing of autopsies, specifically at the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.

We recall reading of a small community in Israel being attacked by Arabs. It was in the interim between the evacuation of the British control and the formation of the Jewish state. The Jews fought valiantly and appeared to be holding their own. Then came the beginning of the Sabbath, sundown on a Friday, and the Orthodox defenders laid down their arms. As a result they were all killed. Tradition was more important than life itself. So be it.

The Jewish Torah forbids the performance of autopsy on the theory, the way you came into this world is the way you should go out.

The Hadassah Hebrew Hospital in Jerusalem is rapidly emerging as one of the foremost medical institutions in the world. In the short space of years since recapture from the Arabs in the 6-Day War of 1967, research developments have been profound in the service of mankind. Hardly a month goes by without a news story in this paper extolling the virtues of a new development in the field of medicine.

Late last year a world Committee for the Prevention of Blindness was established at a Jerusalem Seminar attended by 450 delegates from 41 countries. Recently a portable electrocardiograph tape recorder was developed. These are but two of very many. We could go on and on.

Now comes the clash between religion and science.

Orthodox Jews insist on the abolishment of unauthorized autopsies at the Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. The doctors insist autopsies are necessary for the advancement



JOSEPH PAPP, FOUNDER AND PRODUCER OF NEW YORK SHAKESPEARE PUBLIC FESTIVAL THEATER, NOTED FOR ITS PRODUCTIONS OF HAIR AND TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA RECEIVES MYRTLE WREATH AWARD FROM MRS. MAX SCHENK, NATIONAL PRESIDENT OF HADASSAH, AS ANOTHER AWARD WINNER, DR. CHAIM POTOK, AUTHOR OF THE CHOSEN AND EDITOR OF THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY, LOOKS ON.

of medicine.

The National Orthodox youth movement Zeirei Agudath Israel of America, more than 1000, picketed a meeting at a N.Y. Hotel where 2,500 new lifetime members of Hadassah were honored. Signs said: "Adopt the American Principle of Prior Consent," and "Let Them Rest in Peace, Not Pieces." What the objectors demand is no autopsies performed without the informed consent of the next of kin.

As far as we have been able to determine, there is no reasonable explanation for the decree, except tradition, based on faith in the Bible. Having been taught there always is logic for our beliefs, except possibly the one of the existence of a Supreme Being, we are inclined to favor the advancement of medical science. In the last analysis, it is not the departed soul who is objecting. It is the next of kin who insist their tradition be upheld.

It is a shame that Hadassah, which is celebrating its 60th anniversary, with over 327,000 registered Zionist members, and is the single largest Zionist bloc in the world, should be harassed for any reason by members of our own faith.

Up in Boston

By RABBI SAMUEL SILVER

Up in Boston, Herman Snyder, president of a gigantic congregation called Temple Israel, said something trenchant the other day.

He voiced the anguish over the ban on Judaism in Russia. "We get enormously excited these days about the plight of Soviet Jews. We decry with bitter lamentations the Russian Jews' loss of freedom. And the freedom we are most concerned about is the freedom to worship."

The president of his shul, Mr. Snyder is eager for people in this country to enjoy the freedom to worship. Towards that end this devoted layman holds high the hands of his rabbi, Dr. Roland Gittelsohn, one of the most forceful clergymen in the nation today. Eloquent and prolific (he gives us about a book a year, each of them splendid), Rabbi Gittelsohn is about as close as we get to the great Stephen Wise today.

Mr. Snyder also took time out to praise one of the most remarkable synagogue executives in America today, Bernard Pincus. Once president of the National Association of Temple Administrators, Mr. Pincus has for thirty years been a topflight director of synagogue activities, both in Cleveland and in Boston.

But Mr. Snyder had a word of warning. In urging his people to build a new sanctuary, in reminding them that we should be concerned with the situation of Judaism in Russia, he said: "We bemoan the empty synagogues" in the Soviet Union.

But, he added, "many of the synagogues in this country are as empty as those in Russia," not because officialdom had decreed it but because Jews don't bother to patronize the gatherings of their own faith.

Mr. Snyder records that he saw a car with a sign: "Christ is the answer." When thinking of all the assets of the Jewish faith, he began to wish that more Jews would recognize that for them "Judaism is the answer."

Quite a temple president, that Mr. Snyder!

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