

**PASSOVER FEATURE**

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inevitably the placing of liberation and its relevance in the context of current events.

Recently, 553 delegates from 26 countries gathered in Jerusalem -- liberated and united -- for the 28th Zionist Congress. The Congress became involved through the large number of young people who attended as delegates, at least peripherally, in an ideological discussion which encompassed the relationship of the State, the Zionist Movement and the Diaspora.

When the Zionist Movement was organized 75 years ago, it had a well-defined credo. Its base was Jewish peoplehood and the unity of the Jewish people. Its object was the setting up of a Jewish national home in Palestine, the land of its birth and nationhood. It witnessed the recurrent development of crises in Jewish communities in the Diaspora. It never wavered from its commitment to the ingathering of the exiles. Aliyah and education were two foundation stones on which the Movement was built.

All of these are as relevant today as they were 75 years ago. What has changed are tasks and functions. Before the establishment of the State, a major function of the Zionist Movement, particularly in such centers as the United States and Great Britain, was the winning of public and governmental support for the establishment of the Jewish State. The establishment of the State fulfilled the political function of the Zionist Movement.

In 1971, the establishment of the reconstituted Jewish Agency witnessed another fundamental act, namely, the transfer of vital elements of work in Israel to the Agency.

The Congress, meeting for the first time after this transfer and representing now the World Zionist Organization with its more limited function, was faced with the need to come to grips with the changed situation and to establish tasks of the Movement and their present relevancy to the involvement of the total Jewish community in its work for Israel. The Congress needed to liberate itself from old concepts and adjust to present conditions. It needed liberation of thought, consideration of differences, opportunity for Dialogue, tolerance of diversity. In all this it proved poorly equipped. The difficulty arose not from one or another resolution passed by the Congress, but from the lack of understanding of the young (abetted by their elders) of the position of a great volunteer movement in the Diaspora; of the diversity of language and, indeed, of mores and methods of thought.

It was unaware of, or disregarded, the distinctiveness and varying conditions in different countries and continents, of the need to establish an amalgam of united and universal commitment to Israel and the need for diversification of method and approach.

Moreover, there was involved in the attitude of the Israeli Zionist delegation a denigration of the Diaspora and, finally, a rejection of it in terms of fundamental Jewish survival.

One need not look at the flourishing Jewish Diasporas of ancient times, of the role they had in Jewish survival, for rationalization of today's Diaspora which plays a fundamental role, supportive though it necessarily is, in Israel's security and survival.

As we sit around the Pesach table, a month after the close of the Congress, there is need to add to the conventional "next year in Jerusalem" the prayer that the great Jewish tradition of learning, of respect for diversity, of commitment to liberalism remain the hallmark of the dialogue which must take place between Israel and the Zionist communities throughout the world.

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