

# Passover Petition

BY ROBERT E. SEAL

Deliverance! Deliverance! The Psalmist is confident that the Lord will deliver us "from the snare of the fowler and from the noisome pestilence."

And Passover, the festival of Redemption, carries on its strong wings the promise of deliverance. Long, long ago, our forebears thought only in terms of exodus from Egypt, land of ancient taskmasters, when they spoke of deliverance in the Passover season. Later, even when

## LAS VEGAS ISRAELITE

they prayed for such release from Egypt, they meant escape from the arms of Roman oppressors. As recently as three decades ago, the petition was for deliverance from Hitler.

This year, we have sad reason to lift our voice at Pesach time in appeals for the deliverance of the small, besieged Jewish community in Iraq for release from cruel tormentors.

How tragic the lot of our brothers and sisters in Iraq! The world's oldest Jewish community outside Israel, the Jewish enclave of Iraq held 120,000 Jews at the time of the rebirth of the State of Israel. By May, 1967, after the ingathering, only 2500 remained. Then the so-called Six Day War visited severe repercussions on the community. In February, 1968, out of Baghdad went forth the decree that the department of Land Registration was henceforth to abstain from carrying out any transactions regarding the "immovable properties" of Iraq's ancient Jewish community.

Expropriation of Jewish holdings became the order of the day. Jews of Iraq found it difficult, if not impossible, to get jobs. Then, General Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, who had been hoisted to the Presidency of Iraq by leftist revolutionaries, began to grind the faces of Iraq's Jews with even greater force and less mercy. Charges of spying for Israel were filed; and on Jan. 27, 1969, the world was shocked to learn that nine Jews, together with five Moslems and Christians, were hanged in the public square.

In recent weeks, a new chapter of persecution and execution of the pitiful remnant of Iraq's Jews has been entered in the book of infamous deeds. One Jew who managed to escape the current genocidal madness has reported that in all likelihood 10 more Jews who were arrested have been hanged. Of the 700 Jews remaining from that noble, long line of Iraq's Jewry, half have appealed for visas to leave. The government has taken once more to expropriating Jewish property. Between \$150,000,000 and \$200,000,000 worth of Jewish hospitals, schools, businesses, and residences apparently have been snatched by a hostile government.

Against this mournful backdrop of injustice, murder, and confiscation, the government of Iraq has cynically declared that Jews in that tormented land continue to enjoy full rights and free-

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dom. Where do we turn now for relief, for deliverance, for elementary justice of the long-suffering Jews of Iraq? It is futile to hope that an appeal to the United Nations would bring assistance in this time of deepening turmoil in the Middle East.

So once more, we are back to the resources of our age-old Passover prayers--exhortation for relief and for redemption. There must be a bit of the spirit and determination of Moses in all of us, the spirit reaching out to those in Iraqi bondage in the plea for escape from present-day fowler, present-day noisome pestilence.

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