

City People at Prayer

By ROBERT E. SEGAL

Prayers for world peace will be right and proper throughout that awesome period beginning with Rosh Hashanah and running on to and perhaps a bit beyond Yom Kippur. But would it not be in order to suggest that American Jews, once they have dispatched to the heavens above their entreaties for an end of war, turn to prayers for the plight of city dwellers?

Consider: Many of the Jewish festivals are rooted in Jewish experience as a rural people. Think upon the traditional summons to the observance of the New Year: "On the first day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work. It is a day for you to blow the Shofar." When the Jews of ancient times, in splendid obedience to this behest, did "no laborious work", they had no office desks to close, not busy city streets to cross (hopefully in safety), no urban smog to walk through. The chores they abandoned on the holy days had to do with harvesting, tending flocks, fetching water.

All this in antiquity. As nomads before the conquest of Canaan, as new members of an agricultural society after entering Canaan, our Jewish forebears observed Rosh Hashana in a bucolic setting.

But after the fall of Jerusalem, after the destruction of the Temple, on through the years of exile and, eventually, in the long period of diaspora, Jews found the necessity to gear into life in larger communities. We need not recount here the agony of adjusting to ghettos created by harsh overlords; for the purpose of this New Year musing, we need only remind ourselves that the Jews became an urban people.

So it is that to be a Jew in the United States today in the High Holy Days means for most of us to be preoccupied with city lives, city problems. When we pray for a good year, we shall be praying for relief from the pressures and predicaments now saddled upon urbanites.

We shall pray for much---for an end to deepening poverty, for new curbs against crime, for relief from political chicanery.

We shall pray, too, for the time and patience to delve into the escalating problems of the cities and for guidance in tackling those challenges. More specifically, some of us will be remembering that Mayor Joseph L. Alioto of San Francisco, in a prayer of his own devising, has called for the appointment of a Henry Kissinger for the cities. We will have in mind that members of the New York Urban Coalition are petitioning for "political risk" insurance for ghetto areas after having labeled some of the ghettos as "small, underprivileged foreign countries in our midst."

We shall be lending support to those up-

right members of other ethnic groups who are combining forces to put an end to slayings, muggings, arson, and other outrages prevalent in urban centers.

Aware of the fact that many cities may soon be facing bankruptcy, we shall pray for enlightenment about and success with revenue sharing plans. Observing the dilemma of bread winners in need of day care centers, we shall budget a portion of our prayers in that direction.

Our appeals will arise for more and better low income housing, for expanded health programs decently financed, for a better environment and relief from traffic snarls.

Finally, we shall make a Rosh Hashanah appeal for new insight and new resolve for those in power in Washington: We cannot endure any further Vietnamization of our cities. We cannot remain silent when the budget for social improvement is cut by more than four billion dollars while government expenditures for military programs increases by a similar amount.

Being human, we shall pray, in the cities, about those matters that affect us most closely. But being Jewish, we shall pray, in our best tradition for help from above, not for ourselves alone but for all who suffer the horror and damage and deterioration of the quality of life in the great cities of America.

CHARLETTE JACOBSON HEADS COJO

NEW YORK (WNS) -- Mrs. Charlotte Jacobson, chairman of the American Section of the World Zionist Organization, has been formally named as acting chairman of the World Conference of Jewish Organizations (COJO) replacing the late Louis A. Pincus.

The COJO officers took the action at a special meeting at which they voted to name the newly-created COJO Foundation for Jewish Education in memory of Pincus.

The newly-named Louis Pincus Foundation for Jewish Education will operate on a basic budget of \$600,000 annually and will initiate teacher-training programs, produce new textbooks and establish a central pedagogic institute in Jerusalem.

New Year Message

By Mrs. Max N. Matzkin
(Natl. Pres. Hadassah)

It is customary on the eve of the New Year to take stock of oneself and to take stock of the world in which one lives. If we looked only at the picture which the world presents, we would fall into the depths of gloom and despair.

Terrorism is still permitted to flourish without effective and considered reaction. Anti-Semitism is again rampant in many parts of the world even though thinly disguised as anti-Zionism, as was evidenced at the recent World University Games in Moscow.

Too many people in the world are still hungry and oil is being used to roil troubled waters, not to smooth them.

All over the world men of good will have determined to exert every effort to ease the conditions of life for people in the Soviet Union. Man is beginning to think in terms of the total needs of mankind and not only the narrow interests of a particular country or a particular group of people. Tiny sign-posts spring up here and there as an indication that the road to eventual peace and harmony is being slowly and laboriously sought.

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