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Renewal Under Siege

By Moshe Davis

Israeli society has been tested to the roots as never before since the birth of the State. Not only on the field of battle, but in the homes, the schools, even in the kindergartens, the unended Yom Kippur War has darkened the spirit, the heart and the mind of the entire population. To greet one's neighbor with Shalom is to utter a prayer.

In the very last month preceding the New Year, bodies of almost two thousand dead were reinterred from temporary military graves to family burial plots. The House of Israel is in mourning, and the Jewish People wherever they dwell are the bereaved.

How then does a nation of mourners face its future? The stark facts of Israel's political and military crises occupy the headlines throughout the world. Yet the triumph of the Israeli way of life -- transmutation of vicissitude into life-sustaining deeds--hardly reaches out beyond its borders, and often is not apparent to the Yishuv itself.

The nature of that triumph is reflected in the Israelis' oft-times heartbreaking self-analysis and public critique; in their solemn determination that elected authority bear full responsibility; in their consecrated resolve that the historical process of Shivat Zion, of the Return to Zion, shall continue unabated; in their ultimate commitment to guarantee, whatever the personal sacrifice, elementary security and surcease from war.

Without vision, it is taught, a people perishes. With vision, we might add, a people is possessed. How else explain the inexplicable in Israel today? The poignant songs around the tanks; "Thus may it be...;" "Sing even when there is pain;" "Peace is your life;" How else understand the so-called "protest" movement -- those who fought, the people themselves, now formed into a phalanx of democracy in new civilian initiatives on behalf of immigration, housing, the disadvantaged, and indeed, "the beauty of our country?" Thus, unlike the contemporary chronicle, the historian of the future may place a different stamp of interpretation on the profounder meaning of Israel's recovery from adversity; anguish transformed into rectitude, redefinition and reevaluation of values.

This lesson of Israel's renewal under siege dare not elude Diaspora Jewry. In much of the free Diaspora, Jews are living in a mood of retreat and spiritual attrition. The State of Israel is the heartbeat of contemporary world Jewry. But it cannot -- nor was it destined to -- fulfill the precepts and obligations of the entire Jewish people.

In the year of the Yom Kippur War and its

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aftermath the interrelationship of world Jewry and Israel reached unprecedented levels of intensity. But that mutuality was crisis-dominated. If it is to be sustained beyond crisis, then Diaspora communities in the free world ought not desist from self-examination and redefinition in terms of historic Jewish goals and values.

Is not this the core idea of the High Holy Days? Teshuvah -- not as Repentance, but as Return.

Impeachable

By Rabbi Samuel Silver

When we sit in our synagogues during the holidays it will occur to many of us that if Richard Nixon had undergone what we experience on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur he might still be president.

The bizarre Watergate episode was almost an illustration of the High Holyday theme which, simply stated, is: we are all subject to error, but we have been endowed with the ability to overcome it providing that we are humble enough to admit our offenses and make a determined effort to change for the better.

So, in a sense, each one of us is a Nixon. And the glory of our annual rendezvous with our conscience is that it provides us with an opportunity to avoid the disgrace which unprecedented persistence in wrongdoing can avoid.

With the starkness of the convulsive moral upheaval of Watergate behind us, let us now sit in judgment not upon the Nixons of the world but upon ourselves.

And let us recognize the validity of the holiday syndrome. Sages and psychologists agree that uninterrupted acts of selfishness and greed form a pattern which can lead to destruction.

Perhaps the trouble is that we take the Holydays "for granted" and regard the process of remorse and reform as a bore or a chore.

Instead we should welcome it as medicine when we all, therapy when we are disoriented, and counsel when we are perplexed.

Perhaps we can dramatize the situation with regard to ourselves, and give extra meaning to what we do, if we imagine ourselves traversing the Nixonian vicissitudes.

Much was said about recordings. We know very well that everything we do is also recorded, in our mind. With the candor which the shofar evokes, we can itemize all the "dirty tricks" which we have perpetrated. No one knows them better than we. Thank heaven, they will not be listed in the "media." But, way down deep with our souls, we ought to have the courage to acknowledge them.

Then let us imagine, we are told, who is not impeachable. But every person is granted the potential for avowing one's imperfections. And, more importantly, we are granted the ability to avoid conviction after self-impeachment by rehabilitating ourselves. The test of reform, our sages tell us, is to face the same temptation to which we originally succumbed and the second time around, refuse to yield.

To go back to our national scene, we all

TELL TALES
 "One Man Plus The Truth
 Constitutes A Majority"
 BY JACK TELL

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loyally silent, rather than give evidence that would further implicate Nixon.

Because Ford limited his pardon to just Nixon, the probability is that others involved, who were punished or are facing punishment, will sever their allegiance and uncloak the veil of silence. Then the flood gates will open and incidents not under investigation or even ever heard of before, will receive full disclosure. It is inconceivable those whose reputations have been marred and whose liberty and future is at stake will allow the matter to be swept under the rug, leaving them high and dry to shift for themselves.

On the other hand, with the clear understanding that acceptance of a pardon is admission of guilt, there are those who will prefer to face charges to prove their innocence. The ramifications are infinite.

Ford's decision has turned an ebbing Watergate into a tidal wave.

There is one other related matter that causes us concern. Although it has never happened before, there should be provision in our Constitution against its recurrence.

We speak of a vacancy in our vice presidency, where the President designates his successor. True, confirmation must be made by the Senate, but that is not enough. Some provision must be enacted where nominations should come from properly delegated authority, like a committee of party leaders from both houses.

While we do have a line of succession, it was never the concept of the original enactors of the Constitution that a reigning power should designate his next in line, like kingdoms and dictatorships.

Be that as it may, we wish one and all a healthy, happy New Year with peace.

hope that Watergate has cleansed us of moral corrosion. We pray that the next year will not see the laundering of campaign money but of political ethics. We pray that we will rise above the kind of situation illustrated in a wry New Jersey anecdote about the public official whose chief claim to fame is that he was never indicted.

President Ford likes to say that he has had many adversaries but no enemies. In his valedictory Richard Nixon spoke his own political epitaph when he said that when we hate our haters we destroy ourselves. But the Talmud put it best when it admonished us not to hate people but to hate evil. Courage reaches its height when we discern the evil within ourselves and hate it enough to want to extirpate it.

May our nation be successful in this endeavor and each one of us as well!

ATLANTA (WNS) -- The shaky stability of the Middle East could be undermined by pressure on Israel to make further territorial concessions in the absence of a genuine negotiated peace, Sen. Henry M. Jackson (D. Wash.) told the 2500 delegates attending the 60th annual convention of Hadassah.

BUDAPEST (WNS) -- A huge and imposing memorial to the Jewish victims of the Nazi holocaust was dedicated in the city of Balassagyarmat, Hungary's oldest Jewish community, on the 30th anniversary of the deportations.

TEL AVIV (WNS) -- A TWA jet flying from Tel Aviv to New York crashed into the Ionian Sea near Corfu after leaving Athens. All 88 persons aboard died.

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- Israel's diplomatic isolation from Europe appears to be ending as a number of leading officials are scheduled to visit here.

PARIS (WNS) -- Declaring that "I have not come with a shopping bag for arms to the President," Israeli Ambassador Asher Ben Natan met for 50 minutes with French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing.