

New Year Message

By Elmer L. Winter
Pres., The American Jewish Committee.

As Jews everywhere prepare to mark the beginning of the year 5735, we are grateful and pleased that our beloved country is undergoing a renewal of its faith in itself as a repository of human liberty and individual dignity. We are hopeful that there will now be a resurgence of trust and belief in the institutions of our democracy, as well as a will to make these institutions work to solve our great national and international needs.

Foremost among these needs is that of peace among nations -- a goal to which Jews feel particularly sensitive. We are mindful of the recent upsurge of tension in the Middle East and are only too well aware of the fact that real peace -- including the reduction of the back-breaking burden of armaments -- is still not at hand.

The steps that have been taken during this past year, through the good offices of the United States, marked a significant stride in bringing Israel and the Arab States to the bargaining table. The momentum of these initiatives must not be lost and we hope that President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger will use their best efforts to achieve a permanent settlement that is just and lasting and ensures a permanent security for Israel.

We applaud President Ford's personal intervention in finding a satisfactory solution for restrictions placed on the emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union. The recent slowdown in the pace of Jewish emigration from that country, due in large measure to increased harassment and imprisonment of those seeking to leave, has given us great unease. Though we hope that the efforts of the President and the Secretary of State, abetted by the strong stand of the overwhelming majority of both houses of Congress, will help alleviate the plight of Soviet Jews, past experience dictates that the focus of world opinion be continuously directed at this problem as long as it exists -- so that the Jews of Russia can understand that they have not been forgotten.

We remain concerned with the inhuman and

barbarous treatment that the Syrian government still metes out to its Jewish inhabitants. We pledge to redouble our efforts in mobilizing the conscience of the world in their behalf.

Here at home, our exultation over the end of "our long national nightmare" should not blind us to the many critical problems of our society which cry out for solution. The injustices of a rampaging inflation and increased unemployment hit hardest at those in our country who are least able to bear these burdens -- the old, the sick, the member of the minority group. The skyrocketing cost of medical care demands finally a broad national program to bring adequate care within the reach of all.

We are determined to do what we can to engender a strengthened sense of Jewish identity among our people and to further the steps that have been initiated by us and by others to further the spread of Jewish education and Jewish knowledge.

Let us dedicate ourselves, at this renewal of the calendar, to the strengthening of Jewish life and the vital tasks of moral living and social justice. To these goals we have been devoted for 5,000 years. Let the sound of the shofar inspire us to increased efforts in seeking the achievement of these ideals.

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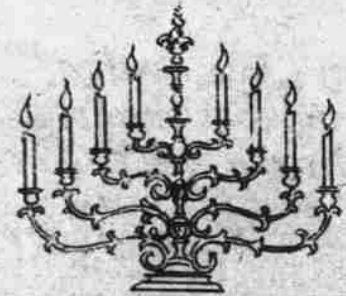
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