

Past Portends Future

By Jack Siegel

As is the case each Passover, we recall the plight of the Jews in Egypt 3600 years ago, with better herbs. Today, it behooves the Jewish community to assess problems around it.

Probably central to this thinking is the condition of Israel, faced as it is with enormous economic problems and the wall of Arabs surrounding it. The Middle East, by virtue (or vice) of being the center of political and economic (oil) turmoil, is drawing the ire and fire of many other world powers. Whether the conflict there will be solved by Dr. Kissinger's step-by-step approach or whether it will have to move to Geneva where the two superpowers will co-Chair, is iffy-fifty at this writing.

Kissinger, on leaving for the Middle East, promised no panaceas, probably to anticipate the lack of success. The Soviets continue to engage in their political pursuits in the same area. The Israeli Prime Minister has publicly stated he favors the Kissinger approach, not so much because he thinks Kissinger's will prevail, as he wishes to avoid the Geneva conference to face the Soviets whose position visavis Israel is not palatable.

However, since 1973, according to the latest Harris Poll in the U.S., sympathy for Israel has risen from 39% to 52% while at home the major causes for inflation and recession are laid at the doors of the Arabs. Also a high percentage of the American people blame recession on strictly home factors. At the same time, a poll in Israel revealed that 75 percent of the people do not have faith in Kissinger's method. In which case, for whom is Kissinger working in this matter, if not for the American and Israeli people? It is something for American Jews to ponder.

Some key and leading Israelis are leaning towards Geneva as the full vehicle for settlement rather than the salami, step-by-step approach of Kissinger which many are now associating with the failure in Vietnam. If he should succeed so much the better. Certainly he should be given all support in the attempt to succeed. But success - for whom?

We are faced with other problems at home. Inflation, of course, is a generic, not a Jewish problem, although it hits Jews as well. It affects therefore the involvement of Jews in

campaign efforts not only for Israel but for indigenous needs which, in the light of conditions here, become more pressing. We discover there is a Jewish poor, mostly among the aged, and this calls for attention as well as funding. What has lit up the matter has been the recent investigation into housing and care for the elderly where Jews, on either side of the investigation, figure prominently.

While these human matters go on, we find that there is an invasion of Arab finance and propaganda in the United States. Petrodollars in Arab hands are seeking out pieces of American business and land, and are moving into campuses with offers to Universities of grants, provided there are no Jewish instructors or professors. And to cap it off, in terms of irony and conflict, an American concern in Los Angeles is training Saudi Arabians in how to protect their oil fields. Against whom, one New York radio station asked, against the only possible threat, the Americans?

All this winds its way to the center of American government, Washington, also to presidential politics and concern over who will head either of the two tickets. Whether it will be the incumbent, President Ford or somebody else in '76 or one of the many democrats assembling and jockeying for that nomination, the heart of the matter is the stand on issues: towards Israel, the oil exchange and as causative factor in inflation, the trade deal with the Soviets which apparently, but not really, hinges on Soviet permission for Jews there to emigrate. If that figure is 100,000, as Dr. Nahum Goldmann has said, who ultimately want out, the matter of Soviet trade is more profound than Jewish emigration, around which Senator Henry Jackson is basing one of his claims for Jewish support and constituency.

The European situation mirrors the overall problems confronting Jews. Bankers there are being excluded, according to reports, from business deals with Arab consortia while governments are rushing higgledy-piggledy into arms sales with Arab countries. The only recent brighter note was French disgust with Arab terrorism at their airports and the feeling that now, finally, something had to be done. But maneuvering persists, especially within the oil consuming nations, as they haggle for advantage with the oil producer (mostly Arab) countries.

While the situation 5735 years ago was tough, one of the reasons was that we were

slaves. But today, we are free people, even in the Soviet Union, to the degree of our distance from Jewish tradition. While a Moses now wouldn't hurt, we have leaders, but the resolution to these problems facing the Jewish communities resides within the talents of the communities themselves and their need to know the facts so that they can act on them.

TEL AVIV (WNS) -- Askenazic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren has called for a mass pilgrimage to Israel for Passover as world Jewry's answer to the terrorist attack in Tel Aviv.

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