

Passover Message

By Elmer L. Winter
Pres. The American Jewish Committee

The Passover holiday serves as a reminder to us that in every age, freedom for the Jew and for all mankind is constantly subject to threat. Though the forms of such threat may change from one time to another or from one place to another, we have learned from experience that vigilance is ever necessary and that those who would foster hatred and bigotry

must be opposed and exposed. In the thousands of years since the Exodus from Egypt, Jews have achieved a remarkable degree of freedom and equality, especially in those countries which have developed a strong democratic tradition. But the Passover Haggadah instructs us in every generation "to repeat once more the story of the Exodus from Egypt" as a reminder that freedom is not a gift that can be bequeathed with absolute security; it is a way of life that every man and woman must pursue with unremitting effort.

Here in the United States, we are especially thankful for what we and all other Americans enjoy in this land of freedom and opportunity. We join in celebrating the Bicentennial anniversary of our nation's birth and take justifiable pride in that our country still stands as a symbol of liberty in the world. These 200 years constitute an unparalleled example of what men and women of different faiths and of different racial and ethnic backgrounds can accomplish together, given the motivation of individual opportunity and a dedication to the highest ideals of democracy.

But we must be ever wary of efforts to spread the poison of hatred and discrimination in our land. Today, we are conscious of heightened attempts to engender anti-Semitism and bigotry in international economic life through the Arab boycott. The increase in economic leverage that the Arab states have obtained through their petrodollars has given them new weapons to try to force their doctrines on the business community to the detriment of Jews and others. This threat to Jewish security and to the achievements we have made in free societies must be met with every resource of our skill and will.

We must continue our efforts also in meeting the challenge of oppression of our co-religionists who dwell in Soviet Russia and in certain Arab countries. The light of world public opinion must continually be focussed on the plight of these people, to the end that they may be granted full equality of human rights or the right of emigration.

We rejoice in the continued flourishing of the State of Israel, mindful as always of the continuing threats to her safety and security, and conscious of the dangers of renewed attack. We

hope that the coming years will see the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, a region that has given birth to many of the great faiths of mankind.

Ever mindful of the checkered history of the Jewish people, we face the future unafraid and with increased determination to carry forward our eternal quest for justice and freedom for all people. Let the inspiration of the Passover give us the strength to press forward in fulfilling our responsibility to further the welfare of our people and in behalf of Jewish continuity.

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