

Passover Message 1976

(By Mrs. Faye Schenk)

Passover, in early biblical times, was the beginning of the Jewish New Year. It marked the Jewish people's emergence from hostile domination and their entry into the world as a new nation. But before their nationhood could fully be realized they had to cross a desert, wage war, overcome famine and organize themselves into a cohesive national unit.

Since that time the Jewish nation has had more than its share of barren deserts to cross and obstacles to overcome. Indeed, no other nation has more fully demonstrated that freedom must be won anew in every generation. Even today many Jews in the Soviet Union and Syria still await the opportunity to escape oppression and to live a full Jewish life in Israel. The State of Israel still confronts modern-day pharaohs who refuse to recognize Israel's existence as a sovereign state. Jews throughout the world are aware more than ever that their Jewish life has been enriched by Israel. We have involved ourselves in Israel's struggles on the battlefields of the Middle East, in the arena of the United Nations General Assembly, at the 'Ovir' offices in the Soviet Union and throughout the Mellahs (Jewish ghettos) of Syria.

This year, Passover has an extra dimension, the United States' Bicentennial Celebration. American and Jewish struggles for freedom are similar and on-going; and they have contributed much to each others success.

During the Seder ritual we speak of the four sons, the first, learned and pious; the second, evil and unconcerned with Jewish and human needs; the third, simple and uneducated; and the fourth, so unaware he does not even know what to ask. Many of us, Jewish and non-Jewish belong to the first category; the second is amply represented by those who prefer to preach hatred and anti-Semitism rather than work towards peace; the third, despite our efforts, still untouched and uninvolved; and the fourth, so far beyond the pale of Jewish concerns that today, amidst the latest Zionist crisis, although they wish to become a part of Jewish life, they don't even know where to begin or what to ask. It is for us to reach out, to establish contact, to bring them into the world of Jewish, Zionist and humane concerns.

It has always been a Jewish tradition to syphon out of every evil the good that can be done. We have been true to that tradition in our reaction to the new anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. We have forwarded the cause of human rights in our efforts on behalf of Soviet Jews, and we have fought for civil liberty in our war against discrimination and the Arab boycott.

We pray for those still in lands of oppression and for Jerusalem's continued success in a world

of peace, but we must follow up these prayers with our own active involvement and concern. "Next year in Jerusalem" will not happen by itself. For many Jews throughout the world this will become a reality only as a result of our continued efforts and as in the Jewish tradition, when that aim is achieved we will have others. Without goals there is no striving; without striving there is no life.

May this Passover truly mark the emergence from suffering and our moving on to happier goals.

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