

100 Years of ORT

Shortly before Passover, almost a century ago, five Jews signed a document which may be regarded as the birth certificate of ORT. The date on that letter was April 10, 1880. On that day, from St. Petersburg, a city that has a different name today, capital of the vast empire of czars, long since crumbled, was dispatched a message announcing the formation of a fund to aid Jews to learn skills to make a living, and calling for contributions to that fund.

The moment of actual creation is always shrouded in some doubt. Thus, the founders of ORT had previously addressed a petition to Czar Alexander II for the right to form such a fund, in his honor, of course. There had not existed, nor was there any legal way to form an organization, hence this way of acting.

The response was quick and generous. Scores of communities sent in letters of joy and acclaim, along with the funds they had raised in

support of the first organized effort addressed to the problems of hunger, work and the right of craftsmen to move out of the Pale - the problems of life for over 5 million Jews.

April 10, not long before Passover this year, marks completion of 99 years of continuous service by ORT and inaugurates its Centennial Year. During these relentlessly turbulent decades, through wars, revolutions, the Holocaust, the revival of the survivors in the DP camps, the migration of millions to form a new Jewish world map, and the establishment of the State of Israel -- through all this which forms the current of modern Jewish history, ORT was part of the fabric of events.

Over two million people in over 40 countries on five continents received the healing and economically constructive services of ORT.

This is ORT today -- a possession of the Jewish people, born of its needs, living with our people through all the circumstances and in different places.

ORT now enrolls 100,000 students in the largest world network of vocational and technical education. ORT now is a vast mechanism of social engineering in the finest meaning of the term. Historically it has always been a constructive force wherever it works.

ORT today is the great reservoir for the replenishment of craftsmen, technicians and all those who provide the human basis for Israel's economy, as well as the quality of life and survival for Jewish communities in North Africa, Latin America, Iran, India, and across the globe.

The World Jewish Community salutes ORT as it enters its Centennial Year in the certainty that before it lies a continuing task.

Passover Message

Rabbi Samuel M. Silver

PASSOVER is history's first freedom festival.

Ordained in the Bible, it celebrates the exodus from Egyptian slavery.

It is also an opportunity to welcome the advent of Spring. As such it is one of the three agricultural festivals dating back to Biblical days. The others are Tabernacles (Sukkot) connected with the autumn harvest and Pentecost (Shavuot) identified with the first fruits of the Spring planting.

Passover is observed with worship services, including special prayers glorifying liberty, the miracle of nature reborn and the inspiration which we receive from leaders who respond to the divine message about human equality.

A unique observance associated with Passover is the Seder (pronounced Sayder), which is a home worship service around the dinner table held on the first two nights of the holiday (by the Orthodox and Conservative) and on the first night (by some Reform).

The Seder is a family or communal gather-

ing at which the events of the Exodus are remembered and during which each individual attempts to recapture the anguish of servitude and the joy of deliverance.

From a special Passover book called the Haggadah ("The Narrative"), the breakaway from Pharaoh is retold. Blessings are recited, songs are sung. Even table games are played and an atmosphere of jubilation and reverence is created. Ceremonial foods are held up and their symbolism explained; the matzah, or dried cracker, is eaten to get an idea of the meager food which the disadvantaged eat; a sprig of parsley betokens the Springtime; wine in an emblem of human sweetness; a bitter herb stands for the bitterness of slavery.

The New Testament Last Supper was a seder (which is a Hebrew word meaning Order or Procedure). At that time a new significance was given to the Matzah and the wine; thus originated communion or the Eucharist.

Some of the Biblical references to Passover are Exodus 12.3, Leviticus 23.4, Numbers 9 and Deuteronomy 16. Among the New Testament references are Matthew 26.19, Mark 14.12, Luke 22.7 and John 13.

For more information, see your nearest rabbi or Christian minister.

PASSOVER Greetings

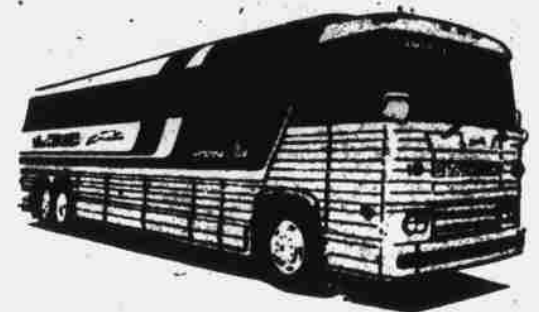
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