

# Reflections of the Year

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As Jews prepare to mark the New Year 5740, we are reminded that throughout our long history, we have alternated between being the victims of cruel fate and the recipients of God's bounty. Thus, it seems almost natural for the Jewish psyche to swoop from the depths of despair to the apex of exultation and back again.

Today, we are concerned with many problems that the Jewish community has faced for many years, as well as new difficulties. At the same time, there are encouraging aspects to the Jewish condition that are cause for optimism and hope -- cautious though we may always be.

Thus, we are pleased beyond measure at the increase in the numbers of Jews who have been permitted in recent months to emigrate from the Soviet Union. At the current rate, the total number of Jews coming out in 1979 may reach 50,000. But at the same time, we must bear in mind that there are some 200,000 current applications for emigration that have been filed, and the impediments that are placed in the way of those who would leave are still huge. We would hope that such restrictions will be eased and that the "Prisoners of Conscience" who are currently in detention or in prison, as well as many hundreds of "refusniks" and their families will be allowed to leave.

The substantial progress that has been registered in building peace in the Middle East between Israel and Egypt is cause for much satisfaction. At the same time, however, we must recognize that no other Arab country has joined the negotiations, and that pressure continues to be applied intermittently on Israel to make concessions that would endanger her security. Certainly, we must remain alert and watchful in carrying out our efforts in this area.

In other areas of the world of concern to Jews, there are varying degrees of unease affecting the Jewish community that constitute sources of apprehension. In Syria, the promises that had been extended by officials in

years past concerning permission for Jews to emigrate have not been fulfilled, and evidence of renewed harassment of the Jewish community there is disturbing.

In some countries of South America, the underlying social instability and political turmoil have given rise to renewed expressions of anti-Semitism from both extremes of the political spectrum, as well as Arab propagandists. The Jewish community is again placed in the role of scapegoat, as has traditionally been the case.

In Africa, the 28,000 Jews who live in Ethiopia constitute a community in desperate straits and in constant danger of attacks from a

variety of sources in a chaotic situation.

Here at home, American Jews remain committed to their traditional agenda of working for the betterment of the total society and for the fulfillment of the American dream, while retaining pride in their origins and destiny as an integral group. In spite of emotional attacks, American Jews will not retreat to a fortress ideology, nor will they abandon their consistent identification with the goal of human progress for all people.

In celebrating our traditional holiday, Jews reaffirm their 4,000-year-old tradition in the pursuit of justice for us and for all mankind.

## NEW YEAR



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