

The Meaning of Passover

BY DVORA WAYSMAN

Why do we celebrate Passover? We are told that each one of us is to regard himself as if he personally had gone out of Egypt. To do this, we need to use our imagination (which in this case is by no means easy) as we try to overcome dimensions of time, place and historical context.

Egypt - in Hebrew "Mitzrayim" - stems from the root word "tzar" meaning narrow and constrained. To say that we must leave Egypt is to say that each one of us must struggle to break out of his narrowness, free himself to attain his full potential...spiritual, emotional and psychological.

Even after leaving Egypt, the Jews wandered for forty years in the desert before reaching the promised land.

The Seder, which is a highly ritualized feast, is central to the celebration of Passover. The entire extended family participates, and this very coming together of all - men, women and children - sets the scene for the whole event. Each of us at the Seder has a role to fulfill. All of us are to experience the Exodus ourselves at this time; thus the symbolism of the Seder must reach both adults and children. Great care and concern should thus be taken to make sure that the children participate fully and receive the proper explanations.

It is customary also to invite others who have no Seder, particularly the poor in the community. The words: "Let all who are hungry come and eat" should be taken seriously. This is the night when the prophet Elijah is to visit each house. Legend relates the Elijah dresses as a beggar to see if he will be received - and to see if the world is yet ready and worthy of the Messiah.

Congregated at tables in every Israeli home celebrating the Seder, are Jews who can easily identify with the command to regard themselves as if they personally had gone out of Egypt.

DISCUSS HOSTAGES

NEW YORK -- In a message marking the forthcoming Passover holiday, Richard Maass, President of the American Jewish Committee, pointed to the parallel between the Israelites' bondage in ancient Egypt and the many hostages currently being held in various parts of the world.

"To those who suffer - whether in an Embassy in Teheran, in forced labor camps in Siberia, or in detention in Argentina, the example of the ancient Israelites may uplift their spirits and provide hope for their freedom," he added.

The Passover holiday begins Monday evening, March 31.

Maass cited the seizure of the American hostages in Iran and the Russian invasion of Afghanistan as two notorious examples of oppression, aggression and forced bondage. But such prisoners, he declared, as well as those in forced labor camps in Siberia or under detention in Argentina can take heart from

the story of the Exodus.

The American Jewish Committee leader expressed sympathy for the plight of Jewish Prisoners of Conscience in Soviet Russia and for the Jews in Syria, "still subject to persecution and discrimination."

FIRST LADY

COVERS FOR HUBBY

The recent UN vote "was unfortunate because it was contrary to U.S. policy and because of its potential to jeopardize the negotiations," First Lady Rosalynn Carter told the

closing luncheon of the B'nai B'rith Women International Biennial Convention in Washington.

President Carter's commitment to Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat, she said "is that the dismantling of the existing settlements and questions concerning Jerusalem will be negotiated between the two parties, Israel and Egypt. They all agree that Jerusalem will never be divided and that there will be access by all to the holy places. That is his commitment. It has not changed and it will not change."

Mrs. Carter's remarks were made

two days after the BBW delegates had passed a resolution expressing their continued dismay at the Carter administration's explanations of the U.S. vote and calling upon the President for "a plain, unambiguous clarification of American foreign policy in regard to Israel."

The remarks also followed by two days an address to the convention by Sen. Edward Kennedy, who sharply criticized the UN resolution and the Carter Administration's explanation of the vote, and called for a full investigation by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

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