

Remember Jerusalem

BY JANET MENDELSON

Called the 'dwelling place of the Lord' and the very essence of the Jewish people, Jerusalem is central to the Jewish nation. Throughout the ages, this ethereal yet earthy capital has attracted the muse and martyr as well as modern man.

Incorporated into prayers, hearts and devotions are directed towards this eternal city. Remembered every Passover with the vow "Next Year in Jerusalem!", the hope that the People of Israel will rebuild the Temple has remained firm.

With a history of 4,000 years, Jerusalem, which has been revered and admired throughout her history, has also been destroyed and reduced to ruins. Perhaps the greatest destruction was in 70 A.D., when the Second Temple was rampaged by the Romans during the Passover pilgrimage.

"The whole nation had been shut up by fate as in a prison, and when war encompassed the city, it was packed with inhabitants," wrote

first century historian Josephus Flavius. In his Jewish Wars, Flavius also reports that over a million Jews were killed and close to 100,000 imprisoned in this massive destruction.

Visitors to Jerusalem will stream into the city in their thousands as the Passover season approaches. They are witness to the early days of spring that earmark the holiday as well as the innumerable holiday preparations.

The aroma of a special type of hand baked matzah, or unleavened bread, wafts out of Jerusalem's side streets, as the carefully baked flat, round matzot are prepared for use the world over. In nearby kibbutzim, or agricultural villages, the counting of the omer, or reaping of the first sheaves of barley, is reminiscent of the days of the Temple when these contributions were offered to the Temple priests until the Feast of Weeks, or Shavuot, 49 days later.

Passover recalls the stormy paths of Jewish history, but it is the spirit of freedom which primarily characterizes the festival. In the traditional Seder meal, Jerusalem residents, new immigrants and tourists all recall the dramatic deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage while praying for those still oppressed.

Jewish history may be splattered with blood spilled by our enemies, but it also projects for all to see the faith and freedom to which Jewry has clung for centuries, and the eternal longing for Zion. Until Jews the world over can live in accordance with their Jewish heritage, faith and culture in the place of their choice, it is appropriate to recall the cry of Moses to "Let my people go" and words of Rabbi Jacob Emden, written in the year 1745:

"So hear me, brothers and friends, remember Jerusalem, and do not, Heaven forbid, think of settling outside the Land. It seems to us that as soon as we enjoy some tranquillity outside the Land of Israel, it is as though we have found another Land of Israel and another Jerusalem, and that is why all these evils have come upon us."

BRUSSELS (WNS) -- Radio Judaica, Europe's first Jewish radio station, began broadcasting from here. Supported by the local community, the station features news and community reports.

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- Terrorist organizations have begun operating a printing house in Lebanon which produces foreign currency to be smuggled into Israel, according to a report in Maariv. A large scale probe is underway which involves the Israel Police, Interpol and the FBI.

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- The scheduled appointment of Knesset Speaker Yitzhak Shamir of Herut as Foreign Minister has been postponed until the "status of the Liberals in the government is improved," Premier Menachem Begin announced.

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- A group of 15 MKs are preparing a bill to extend Israel law to the Golan Heights. The Golan, like the West Bank, the Sinai and the Gaza Strip, is presently considered administered territory. Settlements on the Golan have been urging the step as a means of preventing the area from being turned back to Syria in any eventual peace agreement.

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