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Chanukah and Human Rights

BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM

Eight lights for human rights. No more appropriate theme could be found for Chanukah 1980. Chanukah commemorates the victory of Judah the Maccabee over the massive armies of the Syrian Empire, and then the rededication of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem which the Syrians had defiled.

The story of Chanukah reads like a Bible tale, but its meaning today is profound and universal. In effect, the Maccabean victory was the first successful triumph in the struggle for human rights, particularly for freedom of conscience and pluralism in the history of man kind. Had the Syrians defeated the Maccabees in the epic struggle for the right of every group to be itself, in its own terms, Judaism might have perished, and quite conceivably Christianity and Islam would never have emerged. That's how fateful Chanukah was for the whole human family.

Chanukah 1980 hopefully will heighten the consciousness of the Jewish people and that of many others, to rekindle the Maccabean spirit in today's troubled world - to refuse to stand by idly, to capitulate to modern-day tyrants - the fanatic Ayatollah Khomeinis of the world - who desecrate the dignity of human beings created in the sacred image of God by denying religious and political freedom.

Instead of cursing the darkness, Chanukah is a time to light a candle for life and hope.

Behind The Scenes

At The United Nations

By David Horowitz

A World-Union Press Feature

UN Battleground

UNITED NATIONS (WUP) -- Moses Moskowitz, a veteran UN Observer, author of several volumes on human rights and who represents the Consultative Council of Jewish Organization, has come out with a new book which, in essence, confirms the views expressed by your correspondent on a number of occasions, namely, that we have here in this world organization a sort of 'international reformatory.'

Entitled "The Roots and Reaches of United Nations Actions and Decisions" (Sijthoff & Noordhoff Publishers, the Netherlands), the 210 - volume covers almost every aspect of UN activities, including, of course, the Middle East conflict.

Termining this House of Contention a "battleground of conflicting ideologies," he notes in his opening chapter that "the UN can neither

be captured nor dismissed in one all-encompassing act of commission or omission. Neither," he adds "can it be judged as an undifferentiated whole: to do so is to fail to penetrate the naked core of its meaning." And while he notes that "for all its difficulties and contradictions, limitations and doubts, the UN has for more than three decades discharged vital negotiating and pacifying functions in the international community and has served as an instrument for the promotion of human welfare," he concludes in chapter seven, entitled "Reform Without Change," that "the roots and reaches of UN actions and decisions are not necessarily solidly anchored in the principles and purposes of the Charter, nor governed and defined by the objectives of the World Organization."

Author Moskowitz -- who in his personal life adheres strictly to the traditional tenets of the Torah - faith and who has kept a close eye on the multiple doings here -- continues in his criticism: "The UN," he declares, "seems to be more adept at orchestrating tensions than at calming tempers; more adroit at arousing passions and inflaming prejudice than at calming tempers; more adroit at arousing passions and inflaming prejudice than at achieving accommodation; more artful in acting out real or simulated rage than at resolving disputes. And the world body is never more vulnerable than when called upon to deal with issues that involve moral considerations and moral actualities. Human aggression, violence and destruction are unleashed when nations seek and find sanction to act freely and punitively in the name of humanity's highest ideals.

"We have seen," he adds, "how the growing emphasis on the acceleration of national independence and the eradication of colonialism hastened the politicization of the UN and made it into a partisan body given to practicing double standards; how the struggle against racism and racial discriminations turned into a vendetta against one State Member and was used as a stick with which to beat another (Israel); how the assertion of self-determination for Palestinians ended up in the virtual postulation of Israel's destruction as a principle objective."

And colleague Moskowitz is emphatic in stating that "no amount of historical interpretation can offer consolation for the defects of the UN; they run deep and cut to the very essence of its character. At the heart of all criticism of the world body is its manifest partiality."

Delving into the Middle East conflict, to which he devotes a separate chapter, Moskowitz points out that "one party seems to have no faults and the other no virtues. Rarely," he says, "if ever, since its creation in 1948 has there been a break in the constant repetition of accusations against Israel verging on incantation, nor in its censure which has invariably followed with the inevitability of a categorical imperative. Far from being a prophet in command of the truth, the United Nations for the most part of thirty-odd years acted as a co-efficient of equivocation and ambiguity, predilection and preference.

Moses Moskowitz' book, "The Roots and Reaches of United Nations Actions and Decisions," is a classic mirroring the world organization as it really is.

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THINGS WERE ROUGH WHEN I WAS A BABY. NO TALCUM POWDER.

TELL TALES

"One Man Plus The Truth
Constitutes A Majority"

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other sects, religions and beliefs looking forward to and rejoicing in the spirit of Christmas.

The metamorphosis of Christmas was not a straight, smooth road from the way it was to what it is. There were bypaths, drawbacks, tangents, and obstacles created by the natural course of history through the ages.

While Santa Claus is obviously a result of creative imagination, the thought was derived from and patterned after a real, historical person. During the 4th Century, Nicholas, an eight year old orphan, but independently wealthy, spent his life being kind and generous to the less fortunate in his native town in Asia Minor. He was elevated to Bishop of Myra and in the 9th Century was canonized. His Dutch name was Santa Claus.

The furthest reference to a Christmas tree is a legendary story of a wounded Swedish officer being cared for by the people of Leipsig during the 30 Years War in the 17th century. As an offer of gratitude he set up a lighted tree in a church on Christmas Day.

The Christmas tree was introduced to America in 1747 by Germans settling in Pennsylvania.

Five years later the Moravian sect decorated their trees with lighted candles. Catholic and Protestant colonists from Holland introduced the annual St. Nicholas visitation to America.

Early colonists were divided in the recognition of December 25th. Members of Church of England, Dutch Reformed, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Episcopalian and certain German sects honored the holiday. Quakers, Baptists, Presbyterians and Puritans ignored the date. It was on the night of December 25, 1776, George Washington crossed the Delaware River to defeat the Hessians celebrating Christmas at Trenton.

Fantasy had Santa arriving in a cart, a wagon, on mule, drawn by goats and other means of transportation until Clement Moore's "A Visit From St. Nicholas" in 1922, and thereafter the popular conception was a sled drawn by reindeer. In 1847, the first classroom Christmas tree was decorated in New York City Episcopalian Sunday School.

The individual states commended declaring Christmas a legal holiday. Alabama, which like all southern states celebrated Dec. 25 with fireworks a la Fourth of July, was the first, in 1836, and the rest followed suit: California, 1851, Nevada, 1861, Utah, 1882, etc., with Oklahoma being last in 1890.

As late as 1855, all religions were still not in accord in their tolerance of the holiday. The Dec. 26 edition of the year's New York Times stated: Churches of Presbyterians, Baptists and Methodists were not open yesterday. They do not accept the day as a Holy one, but Episcopalian, Catholic and German churches were open. Inside they were decked with evergreens. However, by 1880, all evangelical churches were accepting Christmas.

Passing of Christmas gifts in those days was not emphasized except the wealthy were expected to be generous to the poor. In the middle of the 19th Century, due to the influence of Charles Dickens' writings, singing of Christmas carols became prevalent and the sending of cards began in 1875.

The classic editorial which began, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus," in response to a child's query, was written by Francis Church for the New York Sun of Dec. 21st, 1897.

In recent years Santa Claus has become to be known as a communal folk figure. A Pennsylvania judge ruled in 1936, that any doubters of Santa Claus who appeared before him would be held in contempt of court. The court citation read: Santa is not a figment of the imagination but an actuality. He is the symbol of kindness, a token smiling charity and a badge of all that is cheerfully benevolent.

Commercial exploitation of Christmas has become systematic and thorough, impelling Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Episcopalians and

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