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HAPPY HANUKAH

AN UNNECESSARY FLAP

There was an enormous flap in Israel when President - elect Ronald Reagan refused to meet with Premier Menachem Begin during the Israeli leader's nine - day visit to the United States. Although Begin accepted Reagan's explanation that it would not be proper to meet with foreign leaders while President Carter was still in office, many in Israel considered it a snub to their Premier.

It didn't help matters when Reagan did meet with visiting West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. Of course, Reagan was vacationing at his California ranch when Begin was in the

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U.S. while Schmidt and Reagan were both in Washington at the same time, staying next door to each other.

Nevertheless, some people within the Israeli government and the Israeli media have been trying to place the blame for this on Ephraim Evron, Israel's Ambassador to Washington. They claim that Evron has been too closely linked with the Carter Administration and has failed to forge links with the incoming Reagan Administration.

This was strongly denied both by Begin and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Israel who defended Evron at a recent Cabinet meeting. Evron, of course, did have close relations with the Carter Administration which is, after all, his job. His predecessory, Simcha Dinitz, FRIDAY, DEC. 12, 1980

used to quip that he was the only Ambassador in Washington who was criticized for being friends of the U.S. Secretary of State, at that time Henry Kissinger.

Evron and other Israeli diplomats do know a great deal of the people around Reagan, especially those concerned with the Middle East. They are certainly attempting to form closer links by the time Reagan is inaugurated Jan. 20.

When a new President is elected some countries change their Ambassadors, sending someone who is known to the new Chief of State or important members of his-Administration. Evron was chosen as the U.S. Ambassador partly for the contacts he made when he served in the Israeli Embassy in Washington during the Johnson Administration. But that is a decision for the Israeli government.



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