

How to Describe Chanukah to Non-Jews

BY RABBI SAMUEL SILVER

The Jewish holiday of Chanukah commemorates history's first struggle for religious freedom.

The war took place 165 years before the time of Jesus.

Judea was then part of a kingdom which came under the control of a Greco-Syrian king named Antiochus.

Like Russia today, the regime permitted its conquered people to live but banned any kind of worship except that prescribed by the monarch. His brand of paganism called for the worship of idols, including one of himself.

Every nation under Antiochus acquiesced, except Judea.

Enraged, Antiochus sent his armies against Jerusalem and planted his images in the holy temple itself.

Against this desecration a hardy group of rebels arose led by Mattathias, a Jewish priest and his five sons who came to be known as Maccabees.

For three years the battles raged. The fighting Jews held off the mightiest armies on earth. Although they began with a handful their forces grew.

Miraculously, the Jews were victorious! They routed the enemy and repaired to the temple where they conducted a ceremony of rededication. Chanukah is Hebrew for rededication.

Ever since, the Jewish people has celebrated the holiday for eight days. Worship services and sermons in the synagogue glorify the idea of religious liberty, the gift of the Maccabees to posterity.

In the home and synagogue, a candelabrum (Hebrew: menorah) is the centerpiece of the observance. On the first night a candle is lit

amidst prayers thanking God for imbuing freedom fighters with courage. On each night thereafter an additional light is kindled. The crescendo of light symbolizes the enlargement of forces engaged in a sacred endeavor.

Chanukah is a gift-giving holiday. But, as at all Jewish festivals, gifts are also given to the poor. Contributions to charity are a fixture for all Jewish observances.

Christians might have good reason to share in the celebration of Chanukah since the Maccabees saved the idea of monotheism which some 160 years later, inspired the birth of a daughter faith, Christianity.

The Chanukah saga is recorded in several books of that post-Biblical literature known as the Apocrypha. The Books of the Maccabees describe in detail how the weak overcame the strong.

Christians may read about Chanukah in the New Testament's Book of John, Chapter 10.

Also known as the Festival of Lights, Chanukah in 1982 begins Friday night, Dec. 10.

SHARON SETS DOWN PLAN FOR WITHDRAWAL

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- Defense Minister Ariel Sharon has set down a list of demands which must be met before Israeli forces pulled out of Lebanon. He laid down the plans to the Knesset Foreign Affairs Committee.

According to Sha-

ron, "After 7,000 terrorists evacuate Lebanese territory, the Syrian army will evacuate the Lebanon mountains and concentrate in the Bekaa valley. A multinational force will replace the Syrian force. At the next stage, a prisoner exchange will

take place and Israel will be given the bodies of her dead." Only at that stage will the Israeli forces withdraw to the 45 kilometer security line, which it will hold until a security agreement with Lebanon can be reached. The agreement should include the presence of the Lebanese army in the south and joint supervision by the IDF and the Lebanese army, Sharon said.

Meanwhile, a curfew imposed on the Lebanese town of Aley was lifted. The curfew was imposed to halt fierce fighting between Druze and Christians in the mountainous Shouf region of Lebanon. In a related item, the Israeli po-

lice unit which has been probing the collapse of the building in Tyre housing the army's local headquarters, has virtually ruled out PLO sabotage as the cause of the blast. Investigators have examined fragments of concrete, stone, iron reinforcement, tin and clothing as well as other evidence. They

said they have found no traces of an explosion. The current and latest theory remains that the explosion, which killed 89 persons, including 75 Israelis, was caused by a gas leak from cooking cylinders inside the building, set off by someone striking a match.

GENEVA (WNS) -- Rumanian Orthodox Archbishop Valerian Trifa, who was recently ordered deported for lying about his Nazi past to obtain American citizenship, plans to settle in Switzerland, the Swiss Jewish weekly La Gazette Juive reported here. Trifa, now 68, lived in the U.S. since 1957. He was stripped of his citizenship in 1980. A Foreign Office spokesman said the Swiss government has not yet received a request for asylum from Trifa.

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