

**OUR MAN
IN HAIFA**



CARL ALPERT

*Not the Plagues -
But The Ten Blessings*

HAIFA -- The Passover season is occasion for telling and retelling the story of the exodus from Egypt, and the terrible Ten Plagues which helped put the pressure on Pharaoh to let our people go. In our own times some critics of Israel, both overseas and domestic, have so much fault to find with our government that they never cease to tell and retell all the faults, flaws and failings, real or imaginary which they find in the Jerusalem administration. The trouble is that constant repetition may give some people the impression that Israel is indeed today undergoing a modern version of the Ten Plagues.

There is no doubt that we do have problems, but when I began to take stock, and to balance our difficulties against our blessings, I found that the latter by far outweighed the "plagues." Why should we not take note of all the things that are right with Israel -- all the things that give us cause for pride and rejoicing - all the elements that make life in Israel a matter of utter joy and satisfaction. So here we go with our 1983 list of the Ten Blessings of Israel:

1. True democracy, where no one is muzzled, where even maverick opinions can be expressed, where the will of the people is supreme, so that no one, whether Labor Party

or Likud, is beyond public scrutiny.

2. The children, the adorable, bright-eyed, talented, over - active little kids, whether dark - skinned or blondes, who bubble over with enthusiasm and sometimes with chutzpa. (Alas, they eventually grow up!)

3. A national pride, where Jews stand with heads erect; where they do not yield to terrorism, nor knuckle under to big uncles; where the memory of the six million assures that this generation will not cooperate in any effort to endanger its survival.

4. A concern for the minorities - yes, we dare say it, despite all the lies that have been told - where we have been responsible for raising the standard of living in every field for the non - Jewish minorities among us, far above the levels of their brethren in surrounding countries. We can be proud.

5. A Jewish environment; we know when our holidays are, and we celebrate them as a natural part of our lives, without having to build defensive armor against pervasive alien elements which in other lands are dominant.

6. A haven for Jews in need of a home. The refugees from Nazi Europe know full well what that means, though not all emigres from the Soviet Union have grasped its full significance.

7. The kibbutz, its way of life, the spirit of its people, its contribution to the quality of life in the country and its establishment of pioneering traditions which can still serve as models for the country as a whole.

8. A Hebrew culture, based on the great Hebraic and prophetic epics of our people, yet elastic in the modern idiom and responsive to the moods and spirit of the 20th century even in the tongue of the prophets.

9. The new idealism which finds expression in settlements in Judea and Samaria, and even in the face of criticism at home insists on establishing Jewish sovereignty in every corner of Eretz Yisrael. Surely this is in the same tradition as that of the courageous halutzim of earlier decades, who set up their tower and stockage settlements in the midst of Arab areas.

10. Jewish creative genius, here unfettered, which has already made itself felt in agriculture, in modern technology, in music and in other fields of human achievement. A free Jewish people on its own soil is again able to make its contributions to humanity and to civilization.

When the headlines get you down, or when surly Israelis seek to befoul their own nests, reject the negativism like the plague and think of the Ten Blessings. Every good Israeli can add to the list.

RABBIS FAST FOR SCHARANSKY



PHOTO BY
MICHAEL KESSELMAN

SINGING HEBREW SONGS OUTSIDE THE SOVIET CONSULATE ARE RABBIS (LEFT TO RIGHT) MALCOLM SPARER, LIONEL CHISWELL, SHELDON LEWIS, DAVID WHITE, AND ALLEN BENNETT.

A congregation of some twenty members of the Board of Rabbis of Northern California met February 24th in front of the Soviet Consulate in San Francisco to express their outrage at the treatment of Soviet prisoner - of - conscience Anatoly Scharansky.

Together they fasted, prayed, and studied religious passages relating to the redemption of captives. Their fast, in sympathy with Scharansky, coincided with the Fast of Esther for the coming holiday of Purim.

Facing the massive brick Soviet edifice, the rabbis sang Hebrew songs to countless shuttered windows and visible video cameras aimed toward them. They attempted to deliver a signed statement from 90 rabbis representing 120,000 Jews in Northern California, but no one would open the gate to receive it.

The statement concluded: "We fast today in sympathy with Anatoly Scharansky's prolonged fast which has just ended. Long ago this very day was set aside as a fast in a time when Jewish survival was threatened. We ask that Anatoly Scharansky be quickly released to end the suffering of this man, those closest to him, and multitudes around the world who have watched his case with dismay and with deep concern. We ask, also, that the doors of emigration be opened for all who want to leave."

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