

# Passover and Conscience Searching

BY ROBERT E. SEGAL

Departure from slavery; march toward freedom; this core of the significance of Passover takes on new meaning in 1983 for Jews who have been sorrowing over the jagged aspects of Israel's move into Lebanon.

Through the years, we have sharpened our determination during the Passover season to help expedite the exodus of Jews from the Soviet Union, we have sought to see that the blessings of freedom were not cooped up in an exclusive club but were the sacred right of people everywhere. In recent times, we have prayed for emancipation of the dwindling number of Ethiopian Jews.

This year, at Seder tables, the thoughts of many will turn to strains manifest in the American Jewish community over covert and public dissent about attitudes, policies, and actions rolling out of Jerusalem. When evidence of such consternation bursts into the Jewish and general press, sharp charges and rebukes follow.

In the heat of the controversy, much of the fire was directed at Prime Minister Begin; more at Defense Minister Sharon. One prominent American Jewish writer laid heavy blame on Diaspora lay leadership for "going along tacitly and half-heartedly" with actions of the Begin majority in the Cabinet. Another outstanding in-house critic suggested that in holding Israel so high in our esteem, we permitted our Jewishness to be transmuted almost completely into a vicarious participation in the life of Israel.

As the ordeal continued, some in America saw as a load too heavy to carry the idea of an official probe of the massacre by a Commission of Inquiry despite the fact that orderly procedure in Israel mandated this important step.

In the days following publication of the Commission's finding, new criticism arose when Ariel Sharon was given a place on the larger of two ministerial panels on defense and on a steering committee dealing with negotiations with Lebanon.

In one camp the claim was advanced that those who deny Israel's existence as a state have no right in holding Jews morally responsible for the tragedies at Sabra and Shatila.

Had there been no Commission, no searching inquiry, and no public release of the findings, Israel would have suffered in the eyes of many friends of the state. That the Commission did its duty conscientiously and that a measure of responsibility was charged to Israel proved to be an effective purgation. Israel was placed in a position to prove its role as a democracy nurtured by morality. Its most fervent critics maybe of their same negative

## FRIENDS OF THE HEBREW ACADEMY



(L-R JOYCE STRAUSS, GERI RENTCHLER & RABBI JOSEPH TELUSHKIN.) RABBI TELUSHKIN TALKED ON "THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION FOR TODAY'S YOUTH" RECENTLY AT A "FRIENDS OF THE HEBREW ACADEMY" BREAKFAST HELD AT THE LAS VEGAS COUNTRY CLUB.

mind still; but in the high court of public opinion, the state of Israel emerged a victory.

There remains an important question about the attitudes and obligations of that segment of the Christian world that has been variously hostile, skeptical, unrelenting in its harsh judgment of Israel. It was, after all, a Christian group -- the Lebanese Phalangists -- that acted as executioners in the Palestinian camps. Blame assessed the Israelis was indirect; the hands that thrust the daggers were not Jewish hands.

A few years ago an ecumenical group in Connecticut assigned to Jewish participants in this season of the year the role of teaching how the Lenten season has emerged from the deep roots of Judaism. The participating Christians expressed gratitude for the spiritual lesson.

It was reported that they came away with a keen sense of penance and reconstruction. The true spirit of ecumenism offers a current opportunity for the Christian world to engage in honest soul searching about the massacre in Lebanon while Jews are celebrating a Passover dedicated to thanks for that kind of freedom that inhabits the soul and mind -- the freedom of a cleansed conscience.

## LEBANON-ISRAEL NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUED

(Continued from page 1)

across the border.

U.S. special envoy conferred with Israeli officials on the future status of Haddad's role in south Lebanon in a lengthy meeting in Jerusalem the night of March 23. Habib is said to have transmitted the firm Lebanese refusal to have Haddad continue to head security units in the south. Habib also made it clear, sources here have indicated, that the U.S. supports the Beirut government in its refusal to be prevailed upon by Israel to retain Haddad in a key role in the south. Beirut wants to appoint

Haddad military attache at its legation in Australia.



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