

## El Al Makes Three Thousandth Flight



The El Al jumbo jet that took off from John F. Kennedy International Airport on July 26 was not merely transporting people. It was helping to sustain the State of Israel.

With 237 people on board, El Al's three thousandth flight of olim became the largest single flight of North Americans emigrating to Israel.

Since 1965, Israel's national airline, in conjunction with the Israel Aliyah Center of North America, has helped more than 65,000 North Americans emigrate to Israel -- on average, about 2,600 people each year.

"There wouldn't be an Israel without Aliyah," emphasizes Moshe Schechter, director of the Israel Aliyah Center (IAC) of North America.

Largely through the influx of olim, Israel's Jewish population has climbed to 2.8 million. In 1948, when the nation was founded, it was a mere 600,000.

According to Raphael Kotlowitz, director of IAC Worldwide, there is still a great need for new emigrants. "To reduce all of Israel's problems," it says, "it would have to double its population primarily with people from the West."

This goal may be quite a few years away, but Schechter currently sees "a dynamic rebirth of in-

terest in Israel as a homeland." He expects a 40 percent increase of North American emigrants this year alone.

El Al has taken an active part in ensuring the steady flow of olim, says Schechter. "Seats are set aside specifically for emigrants on three flights each week. These fares are greatly subsidized," he notes, adding, "El Al is like family. The airline has consistently made special arrangements to make sure people who want to make Aliyah can do it."

Schechter calls El Al "the fiber of Israel." "In part it is the Jewishness of the flight -- the ghlatt kosher meals, the array of Jewish faces from all walks of life, and the Star of David emblazoned on the side of the plane -- that makes El Al special. It is a Jewish airline, flown by Jews and owned by Jews of the Jewish State. But it is El Al's history enmeshed with that of Israel that makes it a part of Israel.

"El Al is a partner in almost everything that is done for the betterment of Israel," Schechter adds. "This is particularly true in terms of the Aliyah flights."

The Aliyah flights began in a dramatic way. In 1950, only two years after the founding of both El Al and Israel, the 45,000 Jews of Yemen had to be moved from their native land. All El Al commercial flights were suspended and round-the-clock shuttle flights, known as Operation Magic Carpet, were begun. Within months, almost the entire population of Yemen had emigrated to the young state.

"The lives of the Yemenite Jews were in jeopardy," says Kotlowitz. "El Al took all the seats out of the planes and literally transported a people from one part of the world to another."

El Al plans to continue its special emigration flights. In the fall, the airline will have a flight for Israelis returning home after living in the United States. Later this year, a flight is scheduled to take Russians now living in the United States to Israel.

"El Al has helped create Israel," says Kotlowitz. "It is part of the mispuchah."

## New Year 5744: A Fierce Determination

Rosh Hashanah 5744, is a time for world Jewry to take stock, to reflect on the course of events and assess accomplishments and the path to be traversed for the coming year.

Many of the issues faced by the Jewish community in the past year will remain the same. The nagging failure of repressive regimes to free Jews held within hostile lands is again of the utmost importance. While some success has been achieved, the plight of the Anatoly Shcharanskys and the Black Jews of Ethiopia must be fought with greater determination and brought to higher public awareness.

On the international front, Israel's search for peace is continuing. Although the backbone of the terrorist Palestine Liberation Organization was broken, thanks to Israel's "peace for Galilee" campaign, the overall Mideast peace outlook remains elusive. Arab governments continue to reject Israel's right to exist in peace.

Israel is still faced with deep domestic problems that are also of concern to the diaspora. Tensions between Ashkenazim and Sephardim must be resolved, runaway inflation must be curbed, greater subsidization of medical and scientific research is imperative and granting status in religious life to Conservative and Reform movements of Judaism is essential.

Jewish diaspora communities also face many tasks, however, none that cannot be overcome. Jewish education, aliya, strengthening Jewish ties with Israel, assimilation of Jewish youths, the threat of cults, are among the issues facing the diaspora.

Undoubtedly, the path ahead will be filled with many craters and gaping holes that, as in past years, have endangered the very existence of Jewish life. But with a fierce determination and the tenacity to persevere, along with a continual commitment to the centrality of Jewish life and the State of Israel, and a dedication to Judaism, the tasks facing the Jewish community will be overcome.

# Happy New Year



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