

CD-1118 Transcription

Dictation of WINS radio scripts. 1983.

Marc Tanenbaum:

Script is entitled New Year's, 1982, 8--" I'm sorry, "New Year's, 1983." The ceremonies which mark the passing of the old year and the beginning of the new are observed in Western countries by elaborate parties, usually excessive drinking, and generally orgiastic behavior. All that noisy behavior and pagan-like self-indulgence tend to obscure the fact, particularly to most doctrinaire atheists, how authentically sacred human nature and society are at their deepest levels of meaning. New Year's Day reflects the awareness that one cycle of living is finished and a new one, marked by rejoicing and hope, is beginning. It is nothing other than a collective rite of passage. According to leading anthropologists such as A.M. Hocart and Claude Lévi-Strauss, all rites of passage -- birth, puberty, marriage, death, and the new year itself -- were rituals which enabled individuals and social groups to be raised above the material decay and [01:00] death of the past and to be elevated to new states of being. Rituals, including New Year's rituals, are a non-machine technology for renovating nature, for renewing life's power for the coming year. Archaic societies were religious priesthoods, with each person having a role to play in

renewing the universe. By contributing a dance, a chant, some shared food, even the humblest person was a cosmic creator. Secularized people have lost the cosmic connections, and all we have left is competition for status in a bureaucratic society. So enjoy New Year's Eve. It is at least the memory of our cosmic heroism of once long ago. This is Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, of the American Jewish Committee.

(break in audio)

This script is entitled "Judaism and Care for the Homeless." "If tens of thousands of homeless people in America were displaced by earthquake or some other national calamity, [02:00] a national emergency would be declared. But in the face of this emergency, the nation sleeps." That statement was made last week by the Coalition of the Homeless, an interreligious group that has become deeply concerned by the growing number of homeless Americans, now estimated at half a million to two million men, women, and children. Displaced by growing unemployment and neglect, thousands sleep in the cold streets or subway cars and suffer from hunger and illness. In New York City alone, there are an estimated 36,000 such homeless people. Last week, Jewish and Christian leaders joined together at a press conference in New York City at which they called on religious, political, and

business leaders to make a real commitment to find decent shelter for homeless men and women, a good number of whom are the elderly Jewish poor. In my remarks at that press meeting, I underscored how central to Judaism is the concern for the poor. The rabbis declare that the poor remains your brother and sister [03:00] and is to be treated in a brotherly and compassionate manner. The great principle of "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" means in Jewish tradition that it is our personal and communal duty to see to it that our fellow human beings do not suffer. Homeless Americans call for our support now. This is Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee.

(break in audio)

The following script is called "Israel's Inquiry into the Beirut Massacre." The full-scale public inquiry of the Palestinian massacre now going on in Israel proves the opposite of what anti-Israel propagandists and anti-Semites have been blathering for months. Even though the Christian Phalanges pulled the triggers and killed several hundred Palestinians, that did not stop the vicious condemnation of Israel as being allegedly Nazi-like, immoral and whatnot. But look at how that so-called immoral government is behaving. A panel of two Supreme Court justices [04:00] and a former general have summoned the highest

officials of the government and the Army to give an account of what they knew and did to stop the massacre. No one in Israel who was in a decision-making position is exempt from public scrutiny. Even the United States, one of the greatest democracies in human history, took years to overcome the obstacle to a Watergate inquiry. It took Israel but one week. During the inquiry on the My Lai massacres in Vietnam, not a single general was held accountable, although it was done by an American battalion. It is a fantasy to insist that Israel must be perfect, must never do wrong. No other state in the world is asked never to do wrong. No other state is asked to justify its existence by being morally superior. The test of morality is not that you do not ever do wrong; the test of morality is the ability to correct and to take responsibility for your actions. The people of Israel and the political process of the Jewish state are now making clear that their [05:00] democracy is alive and well. This is Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee.

(break in audio)

This script is "Religion and Handgun Control." A unique demonstration of the collective power of religious leaders to help save lives took place in recent weeks in Evanston,

Illinois. Alarmed by the growing number of lives lost through senseless killing by handguns, Beth Emet Synagogue called together religious and lay leaders of the Evanston's Catholic and Protestant churches and Jewish houses of worship. They studied and discussed handgun control for a number of months, and after they had mastered the subject, the religious leaders organized to win a total ban on handguns in Evanston. They organized an interfaith coalition against handguns and worked together for eight months to rally support of large numbers of people in their churches and synagogues. The Christian and Jewish clergymen urge their congregations to circulate petitions supporting the handgun ban. The [06:00] lay leaders sent resolutions for the city council, and both clergy and laity spoke out forcefully at public hearings of the police service committee, demanding an end to the availability of lethal weapons. The effect of that cooperative interfaith activity is that Evanston has become the third United States municipality to ban totally the possession of handguns by the general citizenry. Many religious leaders now hope that the Evanston experience will become a model for similar legislation in other states and finally on the national level. Eliminating handguns from criminal use is a sure way of making real the rabbinic teaching that he who saves one life is regarded as if he saved an entire

world. This is Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish
Committee.

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