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Box 2, Folder 13, "Moonlanding and National Priorities", 27 July 1969.



WINS RELIGION COMMENTARY

July 27, 1969.

RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM
OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE"MOONLANDING AND ~~MORAL CONCERN~~ NATIONAL PRIORITIES"

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It was very much an American crowd that gathered in New York's Central Park for a TV-watch of the historic moon landing. And, as might have been expected, reactions were many and varied. Uppermost was an outpouring of elation and pride over the heroic achievement, and at the genius and determination on the part of men and nation that made it possible.

But along with the pride there were many sobering, even angry responses. A number of serious men and women wondered aloud if the entire space program and all that went into making it a success was worth the hunger of a single child. The \$24 billion spent on these efforts and the collective energies of an estimated 425,000 people involved in launching Apollo 11, they argued, could have been used more profitably to pull some of the 30 million Americans, white and black, who live in poverty out of their suffering and despair and to improve the basic quality of life for all our citizens.

The tremendous psychological boost in morale, self-confidence, and feeling of unity as a people that we are now experiencing is quite likely the right time to raise the critical issue of our national priorities. The moonshot has demonstrated our country's power to do the impossible--when the will to do it is there. But do we have the will and the moral imagination to mobilize our society for human purposes?

Many Americans exult in the moonlanding because it has proved, as one of the astronauts aptly put it, that "man can accomplish anything if he puts ~~ix~~ his mind to it." The spirit that lifted up Armstrong and Aldrin and Collins to the moon can lift up our fellow-citizenw to a decent existence on earth. The very scientific success of Apollo 11 could help this nation overcome its moral failures--its callousness and indifference ~~x~~ to evil and injustice. It could us restore to our national

2 - WINS - Rabbi Tanenbaum

July 27, 1969

life the cardinal virtue of our Jewish and Christian heritages-- the virtue of compassion. But this requires the same determination, the same political leadership and active concern of our citizens, the same instinting allocation of money and energies that went into conquering space.

What a beautiful irony this could be--science, portrayed for so many centuries as the enemy of ~~the~~ morality and religion may well become the very spiritual catalyst that could boost our society into a new era of moral concern and human compassion.

