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The Jewish Year in Review, 1967.

#186

THE JEWISH YEAR IN REVIEW

The Temple
January 1, 1967

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

The Rat Finks are a hep group of conservative young Republicans. At a meeting of the New Jersey chapter in January they gayly chorused a new version of the familiar doggerel Jingle Bells:

Riding through the Reich
In a Mercedes Benz
Shooting all the kikes
Making lots of friends
Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat
Mow the bastards down
Oh what fun it is to have
The Nazis back in town.

Jews, understandably, were not impressed with the public excuse, "It was all done in harmless good humor." Especially in July when the Nazis came back to town--to Chicago-town--to exploit the white backlash after Dr. Martin Luther King's open housing crusade. Television screens were filled with pictures of a large and enthusiastic rally at which Polish Americans and German Americans eagerly handed dollar bills to strutting storm troopers carrying signs "Jews get out"--"Keep America uncontaminated."

The fall elections were by and large free of overt anti-semitic appeals. A record number of seventeen Jews were elected or re-elected to the House of Representatives. Black power, not Jew power evoked the fears of the paranoid and the frightened. But no one could say as 1966 closed that the year had brought closer the burial of anti-semitism. Jew-baiting remained a familiar habit of the backlash, among the unwashed and unlettered, communist--atheist--Jew were often synonymous terms. At a meeting of Civil

Rights leaders with the School Board of Mount Vernon, New York, an angry negro speaker shouted "Hitler made a mistake when he didn't kill enough of you." In the major banks, in the automobile, hardware and steel industries a sign was hung above the door to the executive suite, 'no Jew need apply.' Membership restrictions remained in effect in a number of downtown clubs, like our Union Club, where a good bit of corporate business is eased by drinks and plush surroundings. Most American Jews chose to attribute these manifestations of hate to bad habits, or to the lunatic fringe and to assume that time would unlock most doors. For the most part American Jews went blithely along determined to take advantage of the wide range of opportunity that America did afford. Some Jews burdened with a sense of history wondered if hate should be passed off so easily. They knew that whenever the bloom rubs off the economic rose, whenever a nation is frustrated internationally, whenever there is a breakdown of settled habits, the unspoken hate breaks out and often in the most unexpected places. The summer riots, inflation, Vietnam, can have a serious effect on the context of Jewish life.

Instinctively, and not necessarily wisely, Jews began to haul in their liberal sails. There was a marked disengagement from active participation in the Civil Rights Crusade. When many Rabbis spoke out bluntly about administration policies in Vietnam, the B'nai B'rith and other defense agencies unleashed their duplicating machines and flooded the press with the obvious statement that these men spoke only for themselves. Some Jews seemed to feel that we could afford a fearless citizenship only in happy and settled times. When the skies darken many seem to measure their convictions by what others will think before they ask what is right? Israelis who visit America remark on our eagerness to claim that America is different--

Federations were discovering that they could not automatically count on the loyalty and interest of the next generation. The American Jewish community is a voluntary community. You must claim citizenship in it and many showed no interest in so doing. The burden was increasingly heavy on the few. Faith is the soul of our community, pride in tradition, pleasure and satisfaction in Jewish life, happy identification. Without faith--its soul--Jewishness was a label, a sociological description not a spiritual commitment. It became increasingly clear that the opportunity to contribute to and sponsor Jewish social service work is not sufficient inducement for many to remain Jews. Our communities had refined social service to the nth degree. Our educational services remained by and large crude and unsophisticated and the results were clear for all to see. We trained leaders in social work but required of them little, if any, understanding of the historical and spiritual dimensions of Jewish life. We had been Greeks not Jews--concerned more with the body than the soul.

The evidence is well known. Seventy-five percent of our community contributes to Jewish causes but less than fifty percent have ever enrolled in congregations. Of the fifty percent who do join, almost one-half drop out when their child is bar-mitzvahed or confirmed. Less than one adult Jew in five goes to the synagogue even once a month. The next generation doesn't want to mask ordinary citizenship under a Jewish label. It is asking what's Jewish about a Jewish hospital, about Jewish basketball and bowling?

"When the soul is gone the body sinks heavily to the ground." Pride, awareness and learning alone can feed the soul. The problems are manifold and the challenge mountainous. Much religious education is irrelevant. It

"Golden Purse I envy not

The silver that in bags you keep

prepares the child for a purely ritual act, the bar mitzvah, and not at all for the confusing and challenging life which will be his. The Jewish community is geared to educate to the age of thirteen. Fifty percent of our youngsters never enter a class beyond that age. They carry into life a childish faith and understandably it cannot support them. The Temple has pioneered in high school religious education. The magnitude of the task facing the Jewish community can be seen in the simple statistic that one out of every fifteen children enrolled in a Reform Temple High School attends classes in this building. There must be high school education. There must be a stimulating Jewish presence in the university. On some campuses Hillel has come alive, on others, Hillel is a Kosher cafeteria. In any case, there are Hillel chapters at only one in four of the 1100 accredited colleges in the United States.

With money, energy and determination, the teacher can help a youth climb out of his intellectual sandbox but they cannot do it alone. The indifference and ignorance of parents is the most difficult hurdle of all to overcome. And there is massive indifference in our community. If Judaism is to survive, the Jew must find his way back to the synagogue and to the school house and the synagogue and the school house must climb back into the Twentieth Century.

One of the most exciting developments is the proliferation in courses in Jewish studies which are now offered on 92 campuses--92 of our 1100! May I suggest that large communal endowment fund sums should be spent for scholarships, Jewish Chairs, and funds for Jewish schools; otherwise, such funds may in the end provide perpetual care for the relics of a once proud community. To quote another of Ibn Ezra's poems:

"Golden Purse I envy not

The silver that in bags you keep

Dear to me, my soul!

All else pebbles gathered a heap!

American Jewish life faced the challenge of identification. Jewish life faced a challenge of survival. Far too many still knew what it meant to sing with Ibn Ezra, "How long yet must my feet at fate's behest the paths of exile tread and find no rest?"

Political unrest in the Argentine made its 450,000 Jews quite anxious. The military dictatorship was proper in its dealing with the community but there were any number of beatings and swastika daubings by ultra-nationalist groups. The Tacuara continued its deliberate anti-semitic program. In London, a synagogue was deliberately burned. In Berlin, in Frankfurt and in Hamburg, cemeteries were desecrated. The 130,000 Jews of the Union of South Africa seemed caught in an inevitable drama of white self-destruction. Technically they were free, but there is an unwritten law in that Jewish community which precluded public attack on apartheid. The rabbi who preached Judaism quickly received a one-way ticket back to London.

It was the condition of the nearly three-million Soviet Jews which commanded the most attention during 1966 largely because the activity of the Committee to Combat Soviet Anti-semitism. During the early 1960s, hundreds of synagogues were shut--Yiddish books could not be published--the small Moscow Yeshivah was closed--the baking of matzoh forbidden. Anti-semitic caricatures appeared in the press and a totally disproportioned number of Jews were accused of and executed for economic crimes. International protest was organized against this deliberately provocative and stupid policy. For whatever reasons the Soviet government has somewhat mitigated such activities.

Matzoh is now baked in some major cities. Four Yiddish books have been published in the past two years. A carefully-controlled monthly, the Sovietische Heimland--the Soviet Homeland, run by a self-hating Jew is published, but the Jews of silence remained largely silent, and who knows what the morrow may bring? They cannot open schools. They cannot speak their mind or teach their faith.

Soviet anti-semitism draws from the centuries-old wellspring of Russian anti-semitism. But in the 1960's, it was primarily a carefully manipulated activity, designed to further Russian political interests in the Middle East. Here is the nub of the matter. Russia wants to replace the West in the Arab world. In the past three years, she has supplied Egypt with two billion dollars of military aid and an equal sum in the development aid. Within the past year, Russia has supplied Syria with a billion dollars worth of planes, tanks, and missiles and a brigade of military advisors. The present Syrian government remains in office largely through the support of the Red Guard and Syrian Communist party. It would not be too much to say that Russia will determine whether there will be peace in the Middle East. The unqualified support General Jadid found in Moscow last spring emboldened Syria to unleash the El-Fatah guerrilla and dynamite raids against Israel which brought tensions in the Middle East to a fever pitch. It is Russia's determination to oust the Western sponsored king of the Jordan, which explains much of the current inter-Arab tension, the Syrian-Jordan border shootings, Cairo's demand for Hussein's assassination and Syria's arming of the Palestinian Arabs.

How far will Russia go? The question can not be answered, for it is really the question--how eager is Russia to embarrass the United States by opening up a second front in the Middle East?

When Prime Minister Eshkol appointed his new cabinet in January, he appealed to the Soviet Union for better understanding. The only response was the cancellation of a planned exchange of symphony orchestras and the expulsion from Moscow of a Jewish diplomat. In January, Foreign Minister Abba Eban suggested a four-power guarantee of Middle Eastern borders. Russia's only response was silence and a new arms shipment to Syria.

At the U. N., the Soviet vetoed a motion to censure Syria for year long attacks on Israel. Russian guns armed the Syrian marauders who crossed over Israel's border. Between January and July, there were 50 bombings. In July, Israel retaliated with an air attack on water diversion dams on the upper Jordan. Between July and November, there were 40 attacks mostly through the Jordan. In November, Israel retaliated with a ground attack on the village of El Samu, an El Fatel jumping off place. In doing so, she angered not only the USSR but the United States which has been desperately seeking to retrieve its position in the Middle East by arming the Feudal shiekhdoms of Saudi Arabia and the Jordan. Israel did no more than defend the life and property of her citizens. But Western interests had been shaken and West and East happily combined in the United Nations to rap Israel's knuckles. It would have been far wiser had America listened to what Israel was saying. "You promised us you would pressure Jordan to seal the borders. You underwrite Jordan's military budget yet nothing is done when marauders continue to come! At the year's end, there was no indication that America had pressured Jordan to seal the borders. America's response had been a pledge of more planes and more tanks to Hussein!

1966 was a difficult year for Israel. There was inflation and unemployment. There was the continuing problem of a \$500,000,000 deficit in the

balance of trade. 75,000 were unemployed. Productivity must be increased. Israeli goods must again become competitive in the international market. The government has undertaken credit restrictions and labor relocations. The domestic belt will be tightened further if the economic situation requires it. The economic problems will be met. The overriding question was the question of peace. The overriding fact was the fact of an arms race which no one in the area could really afford. The Middle East needs dams, irrigation, hospitals and food, not guns and planes. A heavy burden rests upon the arms-supplying nations. Will these continue to turn up the flame under the boiling political kettle? Will Russia control the bellicosity of Syria, Egypt, Iraq? Will the United States balance its military aid in the Middle East and seek an international guarantee of Israel's borders. Israel at year's end was arming itself and alert. Israel wanted an end to the arms race, but no one seemed to be listening.

Let me end with Ibn Izra:

Though hope be long deferred, though heart be faint,
On God I wait,
Unto whose mercy there is no restraint--
And whose decree
Can break the shackles and unbar the gate,
And set the prisoner of exile free.

There is hope. If we measure 1966 from an historical perspective, it was a year of concern and tension not unlike many we had known before. Israel survives through God's help but not through God's help alone. The responsibilities are ours. The future depends on our will and our wisdom.



JENNIE R. F. ...
AARON ROSENTHAL
JENNIE F. ...

READ ON FRIDAY ...
ELAINE MAE ...

PAGE I
Kaddish

Friday Dec 30 1966
Sunday Jan 1 1967

Those who passed away this week

Vahrzeits

CARRIE FELBER
SAMUEL SCHULIST
SIEGMUND JOSEPH
WILLIAM B. COHEN
JEANNE B. FEDER
JOEL M. KOBLITZ
ANNIE R. BRATBURD
CELIA W. SELMAN
SADIE D. GARSON
WALTER A. GUDIN
EDYTHE H. BLOOMBERG
MOSES DAVIS
• ELIZABETH STONE
DAVID JANKAU
BELLA GOLDWASSER
MAX BERNSTEIN

YETTA GROSSMAN WOLLASTON
BEATRICE MYERS GOLDSTEIN
ABRAM BUKA
ADDIE R. FEDER
NELLIE KRAMER
EUGENE E. WOLF
LOUIS G. COLE
ELEANORE GREENBERG
ROSE G. BARON
MINA ROHRHEIMER
ALICE C. WEIDENTHAL
JULIUS W. DEUTSCH
DAVID SCHARTENBERG
CLARA HALPER
JOSEPH LEHMAN

PAGE 2
Kaddish

Friday Dec 30 1966
Sunday Jan 1 1967

Those who passed away this week

Vahrzeits

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

EUGENE STERN
ROSE BELBER
LOUIS HIRSCHMEIER
JOSEPH E. GLICK
MAX HARTZMARK
DR. HENRY M. BIEL
JENNIE R. KOPPERMAN
AARON ROSENTHAL
JENNIE F. AMSTER

READ ON SUN. JAN 1
ONLY **

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SAMUEL PHILIP SCHOENBERGER **

* READ ON FRI. DEC. 30 ONLY
* ELAINE MAE SCHOCK