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### A Last Look at Chanukah

We have discussed, in the last two weeks, the origins of Chanukah; how it originated not in a desire by Jews for national autonomy, but as a revolt against a calculated suppression of religious practice intended to weaken Jewish independence by undermining Judaism. We have also seen how the vaulting ambition of the Hasmonaeans corrupted the revolt, producing a dynasty which rapidly degenerated from the selfless nobility of Mattityahu and at best heroic ambition of Yehudah, through the stable regimes of his three brothers to the vacillations of Hyrcanus, the apostasy of Aristobolus and finally, the enormities of Yanaï.

Within 20 years of Yanaï's death, Judaea was occupied by Roman legions, ending national aspirations. It would, however, be mistaken to attribute the regime's demise merely to an unfortunate succession of leaders. Indeed, the major reason that they were so bad was that there always existed a contradiction between the goal of the masses, religious autonomy, and of the Hasmonaeans, personal political power. The clash never portended anything but disaster and, as early as Yehudah, the Chassidim deserted. Thus, Yanaï's reign is not only the result of an aberrant personality, but of a man frustrated by a people unresponsive to his felt sovereignty.

The Hasmonaeans are largely slighted in the Talmud. The Chanukah prayer, *al hanisim*, does have kind words for Mattityahu and Yehudah and there is some discussion of the miracle of the oil and the techniques of lighting the Menorah, but in general there is only silence.

All of which raises the question of the contemporary meaning of Chanukah, especially in North America. It was always celebrated as a righteous war of the few against the many, but not until recently did it assume the popular status of a major holiday, and the elements of modern Chanukah are largely nationalistic.

This seems true for several reasons, perhaps the most obvious being that the holiday is a displaced Zionist occasion, a celebration of and support for Israel at one remove and with a certain amount of ritual. There is the need to prove Jewish heroism, that we were not the horn slaves that the Greek historian Thucydides took us to be, waiting passively to be led, 2,000 years later, to the death camps, but a nation willing like any other to resist tyranny. This is, especially so in the last century, with the advent of nationalism as the prime political force. Chanukah is propitious for making such a point because its celebration cannot (like the Swiss) offend anyone. None of the nations among whom Jews live were involved and the Greeks (those Greeks) have disappeared.

Chanukah is also inoffensive to Christians. It involves no conflict between Jews and Church (as other, later, resistances do) and is even familiar to many Christians through Josephus' works and the Apocryphal Book of the Maccabees, never accepted in the Bible and preserved mostly by Christians.

There is also the coincidence of Chanukah's proximity to Christmas which has, with the decline of Christianity and the untrammeled rise of commerce, become a generally secular holiday. Desirous of fitting in and in jealous of the festive and dominant spirit of Christmas, North American Jews have tended to appropriate it, buying lavish gifts, electric menorahs, and even instituting the "Chanukah bush" in a ridiculous and shameful parody that makes us appear the slaves, Chanukah denies us to be. Thus a festival devoted to resisting assimilation itself becomes evidence of the inexorability of that process.

But this is hardly new. Antiochus' call to obliterate Judaism came from a High Priest and it was a Hellenized Jew that Mattityahu killed, not a Greek.

Admittedly, this look at Chanukah has been tinged with skepticism (Greek in origin), has concentrated on the Jews as their own worst enemy aspect. But such an approach is sometimes necessary, if only as a small corrective to the bromidic view which sees Chanukah exclusively as a valiant effort by a father and five brave sons to establish a free nation. That is obeisance to modern prejudices.

### Landless Arabs?

By ELIEZER WHARTMAN

Listening to the impassioned oratory by representatives of the Arab League states before the United Nations on the territorial "rapacity" of the Israelis, uninformed people might be excused for coming away with the impression that Israel is a vast empire in the process of swallowing up the little land left to the Arabs. Indeed, even those who should know better sagely nod their heads in agreement when suggestions are made that Israel withdraw from the Sinai Peninsula and the West Bank. Countless oratorical tears are shed by Arab propagandists before rotary clubs, kiwanis, church groups, women's organizations, university gatherings, etc. over the poor, dispossessed, landless Arab driven off his soil by the imperialist-colonialist (and now, of course, racist) Israelis.

Perhaps a few facts are in order to set the record straight.

The truth of the matter is that the Arab states possess a land mass greater than all of Europe. Compared to this enormous area of 4,562,340 square miles, Israel, including all of Sinai, the West Bank and the Golan Heights consists of 34,493 square miles, an area smaller than Lake Superior. Take off Sinai, and Israel's 10,870 square miles makes it just a little bigger than Lake Winnipeg.

When we look at those Arab states demanding that Israel withdraw from all occupied territories, we find that in comparison to the 10,493 square miles comprising Israel, the West Bank and the Golan, Jordan is three and a half times bigger, Tunisia six times, Syria six and a half times, Yemen seven times, Muscat and Oman seven and a half times, South Yemen ten times, Morocco sixteen times, Egypt thirty-two times, Libya fifty-two times, Saudi Arabia seventy-six times, Algeria eighty-four times, and Sudan eighty-nine times.

It may be argued that what is important is not so much the size of a country as the density of its population per square mile. The Arab states intimate that one of the reasons for their demand that Israel withdraw is that they are overpopulated and need the land for settlement. Here, too, a few figures are in order.

Statistics for 1970 indicate that the number of inhabitants per square mile in Libya is 2.75, in Saudi Arabia 7, in Muscat and Oman 7, in South Yemen 10, in Algeria 14, in Sudan 15, in Iraq 51, in Jordan 55, in Yemen 66, in Tunisia 75, in Syria 80, in Egypt 82, in Morocco 86, and in Kuwait 90.

The figure for Israel is a staggering 374. If we take into account immigration and birthrate (particularly high among Israel's one million Arabs) population density by the end of the century will be an estimated 873 persons per square mile.

What many well-intentioned people who piously intone that Israel must withdraw from occupied territories often forget is that unless more room is found for Israel's burgeoning population (and let us not forget that at least half of the country consists of desert or hilly areas) Israel will face a severe shortage of land. The scarcity is already being felt as more and more agricultural land is being diverted to housing. Today there is only about one fourth of an acre of farmland per capita. Where is the extra acreage to come from to feed a population twice the present size by the end of the century?

Were the Arabs only to divert a tiny fraction of the sums they are spending on armaments to land reclamation, they would be able to double and treble their populations, for their problem, unlike Israel's, is not a shortage of land, but a shortage of farmland, much of which is easily reclaimable. Vast tracts of land in Syria and Iraq, for example, lie fallow, unused despite the rich water resources in these countries. Indeed, archeologists declare that thousands of years ago

the area supported a greater population than it does today. But with limited funds you can't buy unlimited numbers of tanks and planes and develop a decent irrigation system at the same time.

The fact of the matter is that many of the Arab states need manpower; they are vastly underpopulated, and huge amounts of land could be put under the plow with little effort. The population of the West Bank and Gaza in 1970 came to 965,000, less than one per cent of the population of the Arab League states, not one of which has indicated any desire to open its doors to these people. As a matter of fact, they are demanding that Israel re-accept all of the Arab refugees (who, it will be recalled, quit the area despite Israel's appeal to them in 1948 not to do so) and thus force Israel to cope with an impossible geo-political situation.

What the world refuses to remember is that the war launched by the Arabs against the UN and the Jewish State in 1948 produced two refugee problems, one Arab and one Jewish. Over 800,000 Jews were forced to flee the Arab countries after having been stripped of all their wealth, and came to Israel — 200,000 more than the number of Arab refugees who left Israel. What has Morocco done with the wealth it confiscated from the 350,000 Jews who left that land? Has any of it gone to alleviate the plight of the Palestinian refugees? Has Iraq, which sequestered all of the property and wealth of the 140,000 Jews who fled that country in 1951 lifted a finger to assist the Palestinians over whom it sheds copious tears at the UNP?

The record shows that during the period 1946 to 1972 the United States granted the Arab states \$2.3 billion and loaned them almost two billion more in economic assistance (not counting \$721 million in military aid): the Russians, the East European satellite states and China provided them with five and a quarter billion dollars in economic assistance, aside from five billion in military assistance. (Few of the US loans have been repaid.) How much of that money did the Arab states spend on alleviating the plight of the Palestinians? The burden of support, it will be recalled, fell upon the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), the chief supporter of which was the U.S. The Arabs scarcely contributed to that organization. Never has so much been done for so many with so little recognition!

The Israelis, on the other hand, received only one-fifth of the amount the U.S. granted to the Arabs and less than one-half in loans. But look at the difference in the way the money has been used! Israel has basically solved the Jewish refugee problem. It turned helpless people into productive human beings. The Arabs let their refugees stagnate in despair. The Arab oil-producing countries in 1974 earned an estimated eighty billion dollars. Just one day's income from oil would have produced \$220 million, which would have gone a great way toward resettling the refugees. Yet the cash contributions which UNRWA received last year from all of the Arab states combined came to a measly two million dollars, less than one one-hundredth of the daily oil income, and a night's losses in Monte Carlo for certain privileged Arabs.

Some maintain that time is on the Arab side. Well, that is a supposition that can't be proved one way or another. One thing, however, is clear. The figures — whether they refer to the size of the Arab countries, their populations, their wealth, or their meanness in caring for their own people — are against them.

The Arabs have somehow made it seem as they are the beleaguered ones, that Israel is some sort of super-state, bent on annexing as much Arab territory as it possibly can. It is to be hoped that this brief recitation of some of the facts will have partly countered that notion.

### Dr. W. Kristjanson Will Address Joint Historical Society Meeting

The annual joint meeting of the Jewish Historical Society and the Manitoba Historical Society will be held Tuesday, Dec. 9, 8:15 p.m. at the Planetarium Auditorium, 190 Rupert Ave.

Dr. Wilhelm Kristjanson, teacher, author, editor and community worker, was born in Lunder, Man. He has written *The Icelandic People in Manitoba* and miscellaneous

### Bar Mitzvah Boy of 84

Congregation Shaarey Zedek Friday Evening Service December 12, 1975, at 8:30 p.m. Installation of Officers and Board of Management

Second Bar Mitzvah Honoring Mr. Mitchell Gordon, a life member who will be called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah on Shabbat morning, December 13, at 9:30 a.m. Mr. Gordon will celebrate his 84th birthday on December 20, 1975.

### Community Council Chooses Officers

Morley M. Globerman was returned for a second term as president of the Winnipeg Jewish Community Council by the board at its meeting Nov. 26 at the YMHA.

Other officers are: Monte P. Nathanson, past president; Al Omson, vice-president budgeting, priorities and planning; Guy Kroft, vice-president community relations and internal affairs; Mrs. M. (Marjorie) Blankstein, vice-president community services; Harold Pollock, vice-president education; Ron Polinsky, vice-president fund raising; Murray H. Tapper, treasurer; Martin Erlichman, secretary; Mrs. S. (Judy) Linhart, assistant secretary; Harold Kives, assistant treasurer; Harold R. Macey, Q.C., honorary solicitor.

The nominating committee responsible for preparing the slate of nominees was headed by Justice Roy J. Matas, who paid tribute to his committee members, who had attended many meetings to select nominees to the delegate assembly.

Other scheduled items were pre-empted to allow full discussion of the anti-Zionist resolution passed by the United Nations on Nov. 10 and to consider action to counteract its effects. It was generally agreed that plans for such action necessitated clear definitions of our own attitudes towards Zionism.

The texts of remarks by Rabbi Gunther Plaut of Holy Blossom Synagogue, Toronto, and by Harold Buchwald, Q.C. at the emergency National Canadian Jewish Leadership conference in Ottawa Nov. 19 were distributed.

Acting as proxy for Richard Kroft, chairman of the local Canada-Israel Committee, Mr. Buchwald

reviewed the paper and invited discussion of their contents, stating that "this is the mechanism through which information to our constituent members will flow... It is vital for the board to be as well informed as possible as to the posture of the Canadian Jewish community vis-a-vis any particular crisis."

The board approved unanimously a recommendation by the C.I.C. that a public meeting be held Thursday evening, Dec. 11, at the Rosh Pina Synagogue, under the auspices of the Winnipeg Jewish Community Council in conjunction with the Canadian Zionist Federation and co-ordinated by the YMHA.

### Workshop Production Features Carol Matas



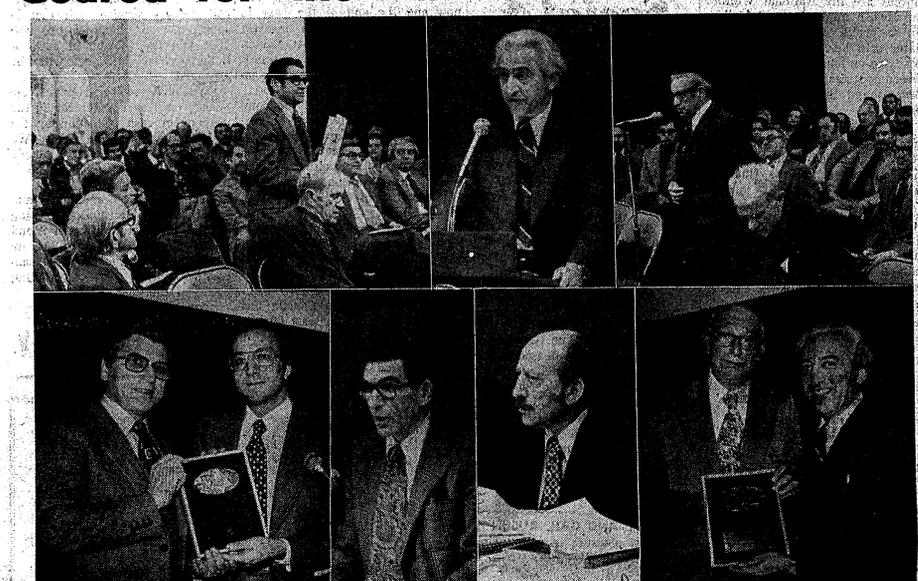
Carol Matas, daughter of Mr. Justice and Mrs. Roy Matas, received her theatrical training at Studio 88 and Actors' Lab of London, England; the University of Western Ontario; Manitoba Theatre Centre School; and the Banff School of Fine Arts. She will be remembered for her appearance in *The Dybbuk* at MTC in 1974. Carol has also appeared in many productions in Toronto with the Toronto Workshop, Factory Lab Theatre and others as well as on CBC in London, England she has been with the Young Vic and Studio 68.

Carol will appear at the Manitoba Theatre Workshop, 160 Princess St., in Sandhills by Winnipeg playwright David King. Directed by Jeremy Gibson (who directed *Crabance*, starring Helene Winston, at the Warehouse Theatre), Sandhills will play from Wednesday, Dec. 10, to Sunday, Dec. 14 and Wednesday, Dec. 17 to Sunday, Dec. 21 at 8:30 p.m. with special midnight performances on Saturday, Dec. 13 and 20. The play will mark the premiere performance of Manitoba Theatre Workshop's professional theatre with its emphasis on Canadian plays and playwrights.

Also starring in the play are Winnipeg actresses Pat Armstrong and Sheridan Jones. Reservations are recommended and they, as well as price information, may be obtained by calling 942-7291.

### Read the Classifieds

### Delegate Assembly of Community Council Geared for the New Season's Priorities



Top left — Sydney Marantz is seen speaking from the floor at the Winnipeg Jewish Community Council delegate assembly Nov. 5, at Rosh Pina Synagogue.

Top centre — WJCC president Morley M. Globerman reviews the year's progress and outlines goals for the future.

Top right — George Skulsky emphasizes a point on the topic of Jewish education.

Bottom left — Murray H. Tapper presents a plaque on behalf of the United Israel Appeal of Canada to Sam Bookbinder for outstanding leadership as campaign chairman during the 1973 emergency.

Currently serving as members of the board of directors of the Winnipeg Jewish Community Council/Canadian Jewish Congress are: Dr. Harvey Allen; Abe Anhang, Oscar Antel, Izzy Asper, Martin Barney, Mrs. M. (Marjorie) Blankstein, Leo Bokofsky, David Cohen, Jerry Cohen, Mrs. L. (Fran) Diamond, Mrs. A. (Ruth) Druzerman, Martin Erlichman, Mel Fenson, Mrs. L. (Freeda) Fineman, Arnold Frieaman, Philip Sheps, George Skulsky, Sidney Spivak, Q.C., Rabbi L. Berkal, Abram Steinberg, Harry Stuart, Murray H. Tapper, Ed Vicker, Phil Waldman, Mrs. H. (Irene) Walsh, J. V. Wilder and Dr. T. Wolch.

Bottom centre — Justice Roy J. Matas presents the nominating committee's report with slate of nominees for board of directors of the WJCC. Izzy Peltz, WJCC executive director, reports on departmental and committee activities.

Bottom right — Morley Globerman is seen accepting a presentation to the WJCC for its role in co-ordinating the 1973 emergency programs for the entire community. Sam Galperin made the presentation.

Mr. Tapper is Western deputy president of the United Israel Appeal.