

MOMENT

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Hashanah, and its sobriety, it is also a time for joy. And not only because of the customs we have developed, from apples and honey to new wardrobes. And not only because the kids are back at school. No, also because it is the first holiday of the year, and a reminder that there are more holidays to come—quite a few more, in fact—and because holidays are necessary timemarks (that's like a landmark, and it's not, but ought to be, a word) in our meandering stroll (or furtive hunt) through life. Holidays not as three-day weekends, but as holy days, reference points, days to catch your breath, rekindle your ambition, find ways to start again and more certainly. The pauses that refresh.

This holiday, especially, the Birthday of the World, is an annual rite of passage. Another year, and, whatever our assessment of that year, another chance, a new opportunity. And maybe, just maybe, this year will work right.

So, Shanah Tovah—a good year. And, herewith, a translation of the greetings which appear on our cover, a reproduction of cards from the early part of this century. Reading from the back cover, at top left we have, "On the basis of the charity we give, for all occasions, from small to large, inscribe us, God, in the Book of Life, and never ever erase it"; to its right, "Up, up the eyes, the flowers in hand, two small beautiful birdies, two children together; they go and tremble, they place step after step, near them a good shepherdess, a mother angel with them"; below, still on the back cover, we have, "The sound of the shofar blasts, a new year is coming soon which encourages every weak spirit, and brings you happiness, joy and comfort." On the front cover, the legend on the bottom right card reads, "Yesterday groom and bride, today a young couple! No, it's not a dream, the happiness is real."

Quaint, to be sure, but the sentiments are timeless. As the card at the bottom left of the back cover says, "A gut yor eich alemen." From all of us.

I want to thank those of our readers from Skokie who responded to our invitation to share their thoughts and reactions to the "Skokie affair" with us. The material they sent was interesting, but we couldn't make a section worth publishing out of it.

This issue goes to press shortly before the Camp David meetings, hence the absence of comment on the results of that meeting. I realize that without the *Times*, still on strike as I write, and without MOMENT, with whose schedule Mr. Carter neglected to synchronize before scheduling his meeting, our readers will not know what to make of the events. We'll simply have to cope until October's issue, when the dark shall be made light and the complicated made simple. In the meantime, this issue happily focuses on other aspects of the Jewish agenda. And there are other aspects, well apart from the world of politics and crisis. That's a useful thing to remember, since it is those other aspects—broadly, the substance and quality of Jewish life—that justify our preoccupation with Jewish survival.

A few minutes ago, we had occasion to place a call to Israel. Herewith, the conversation between the Israeli and the American operators:

"Is this really the U.S.?"

"Yes, it is."

"I can't believe it. You sound like you're in Tel Aviv."

"This is Boston."

"Really, I can't believe it. Give my regards to Jimmy Carter. Tell him we want peace. Tell him to make the Russians free our Jews."

Which seems to me as good a thought as can be with which to end, wishing not only each of us well, but the entire world, whose birthday we approach.

Shanah tovah.

Rosh Hashanah is a very sensible holiday. It comes, more or less—this year rather less—at the right time, just when the summer doldrums have become a bore rather than a relief, just when one is ready to reharness idling energies, to restore the normal metabolism of life. Compare its timing to that of January 1, whose only excuse for happening when it does—our readers in such fictitious places as Tucson and Los Angeles will not understand—is that around about that time of year, we are in desperate need of an excuse for celebration. But how can one celebrate newness, renewal, in the dead of winter? No wonder that January 1 is about merriment rather than meaning.

Still, for all the content of Rosh



PROJECT RENEWAL: A CAUTION

ELIEZAR JAFFE

Mr. Begin has chosen slum renovation as his major effort to alleviate the distress of low-income, mostly forgotten immigrants who arrived in Israel from the Middle Eastern countries during the first decade of the State. After less than a year in the office, the Prime Minister confronted diaspora fund raisers with a plan to rehabilitate 160 slum neighborhoods, within five years, at a cost of 1.2 billion dollars. Since more than half of the money has been requested from the UJA and Keren Hayesod, above and beyond their regular campaigns, the ability or failure to recruit these sums, and the ability or failure of the Israelis to deliver the rehabilitated housing, can have far-reaching political and personal repercussions for both the UJA and the Israeli leadership. Because the stakes are so high for both of the partners, in terms of money as well as credibility, it might be helpful to call attention to some "nuts and bolts" issues that cannot be overlooked.

Challenges for Israel

For the Israelis, the goal of renovating 160 slum neighborhoods in

five years is impractical. Even if the government could raise Israel's half of the money (presumably from Israel Bonds) in that period of time, we have no time-tested models of how to renovate slum neighborhoods, of coordinating the local, district, and national agencies involved, and of integrating social services with housing. We have a tradition of discouraging residents' involvement with the physical improvement of their homes, and little experience with comprehensive urban planning. Moreover, some of the renewal that has taken place in cities like Jerusalem has been poorly supervised and is already in need of repair. The "pocket-parks" which are bragged about are poor imitations of real parks, with their monotonous sandboxes and infant slides, not to mention their frequent state of disrepair.

Neighborhoods, like people, have souls. How many of the planners have acquainted themselves with the "souls" of the 160 neighborhoods slated for rehabilitation? Who has reliable, recent data on the physical and social makeup of these neighborhoods? Who has talked with the neighborhood committee or with the social service deliverers in those neighborhoods? What do the municipalities and their political leaders have in mind for the 160 neighborhoods? Who will be the project directors and what authority will they have to get anything done? Will the physical renovation really be simultaneous with the social work and other professional manpower inputs, and who will decide on the level of

need? One of the most distressing features of government in Israel is the lack of coordination and the inter-departmental preoccupation with territorial sovereignty over services. What mechanisms will guarantee that these features will be controlled?

To avoid a fiasco, perhaps it would be wise to promise less, to spend at least a year dealing with four or five neighborhoods, developing models for comprehensive, integrated physical and social renewal and inter-agency cooperation. Even if the next Parliamentary elections are three years away, the public will appreciate a good start on the housing issues. Grandiose promises which cannot be delivered will boomerang, no matter what the excuses or who gets the blame.

Because of the importance of the Begin housing project, it should receive high priority in the Housing and Construction Ministry, the Labor and Social Affairs Ministry, the Education Ministry, the Interior Ministry and the Finance Ministry. There is great anxiety that the Inter-Ministerial Committee (composed of senior representatives from the various ministries) and the Ministers Committee on Slum Housing will, for lack of strong central leadership, result in uncoordinated activity. Professor Yadin, as Deputy Prime Minister, might personally make the housing project his legacy to the social fabric of Israel.

Challenge For World Jewry

I recently visited a number of prominent heads of American Jew-

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ish welfare federations. There seems to be a consensus among them that they will have difficulty raising their regular UJA campaign quotas, and they are genuinely concerned about an additional campaign for the special housing project. Mr. Dulzin, the new Chairman of the Jewish Agency, has rightly convinced the Agency heads of the need to attack slum housing, but he is far out in front of his diaspora troops and it is they who will have to raise the funds. They have a tough road ahead. "Housing" and "slums" have never been presented to American Jews as fund raising goals, and unfortunately, donations reach their peak when Israel goes to war.

But perhaps the UJA and Keren Hayesod can use this situation to get people more involved as partners in Israel's affairs. For one thing, the fund raisers could insist on toning down the housing project to reasonable dimensions. It will take nearly a year to gear up the proper publicity and information needed to understand the importance of the project and develop the mechanics for its implementation.

Most important of all, the fund raisers must do their homework and insist on detailed accountability from the Israelis for the planning and implementation of the project. To do this, UJA leadership will have to get into the neighborhoods for a first-hand understanding of what they have bitten off and for briefings on the nuts-and-bolts of what is going on with their money. Is it so far-fetched to insist on a two-hour site visit or slide presentation to top UJA executives in America or in Israel on each neighborhood proposed for renewal? Would any business executive run his personal business without site visits, demographic data, personnel assessments, and timetables? Why should the housing project be any different?

Perhaps diaspora communities could be recruited to take on, as their own personal project, the rehabilitation of one or more slum

neighborhoods in Israel. Why shouldn't Cleveland Jewry adopt, for the next decade, the Katamon eight and nine (Chet and Tet) neighborhoods? Milwaukee or Rochester could take on Neveh Eliezer in Tel Aviv for ten years. Every visiting group from the "adopting" American city would see the neighborhood they're working on, hear what's happening and what's not happening and be pleased or angered by the results of their effort. Giving for the "housing project" would be more personalized and a better understanding of Israel could result from the contact. One of the best examples of the focused, personal touch is provided by the Everett family of New York, who adopted the township of Hatzor and have driven every top Israeli official up the wall lobbying for services in Hatzor—to say nothing of their own financial commitment. That's the kind of intelligent, non-charity approach we need from diaspora Jews. It's no wonder more and more givers are being turned off by appeals to stereotyped, hit-and-run requests for generic charity for Israel. The housing project could be a way for personalizing the whole effort and replacing charity with partnership.

Social services are an important, new cornerstone of the proposed housing project. And diaspora Jews know well what is meant by quality, professional services. This has been a Jewish field of endeavor for centuries, and every welfare federation knows the value of its local agencies. In fact, the American Jewish welfare experience is much richer and more progressive than the Israeli experience, which tends more towards physical and logistical manipulation rather than individualization of clients and client participation. If we could explain the kind of social services we need, diaspora Jews could understand what we are talking about and they could mobilize to help us do the job properly.

In moving away from charity, the diaspora fund raisers could ask local Israeli communities to establish non-profit housing corpo-

rations in order to apply for funds from the housing project directorate. The local corporations could be Ottoman Associations, with broad local representation which would develop a master plan for their neighborhoods, a timetable and proposed budget, and present their proposal to the housing project directorate for funding. This would result in local initiative for planning and implementation of neighborhood rehabilitation, and would end the present tradition of bestowing benevolent gifts on relatively passive and fragmented local agencies. In effect, the housing project would adopt the funding strategy now practiced by the J.D.C. in Israel, namely, contractual funding based on local initiative and application review by a professional panel. This model has been very successful for stimulating services to the aged in Israel, and may be worth copying in the housing field as well. Diaspora money should not be handed out as gifts from above; it's bad conditioning for the receivers and sloppy philanthropy by the donors.

Finally, diaspora leadership must insist on real, not benevolent, partnership with the Israelis on the housing project. There should be established channels for immediate feedback to UJA and the Jewish communities involved. There should be a watchdog committee of Israeli and diaspora Jews to review project proposals and make professional recommendations to the fund raisers and provide consultation to the recipients and applicants for grants. There should be careful financial bookkeeping for the project, both in Israel and the diaspora. And the best brains in planning and urban renewal, in and out of Israel, should be involved in the project.

Mr. Begin was not shooting from the hip when he put his weight on housing and social services. Tens of thousands of Israeli families have been waiting nearly thirty years for this project. It is absolutely crucial, feasible, exciting, and long overdue. Therefore, it is worth doing well. ★