

Gaza Tragedy

Much can be said, legitimately and reasonably, about why Israel must retain its occupation role in the Gaza Strip. And why her soldiers have used live ammunition to quell riots there this week, the most deadly clashes in two decades of occupation.

But for those who worry most about what impact such confrontations have on the Israelis themselves, particularly the young soldiers carrying out the orders, a photograph in this week's newspapers was deeply disturbing. The photo showed an Israeli soldier kicking an Arab youth during the Gaza uprising, with the youth having just been beaten on the head by a second Israeli soldier.

Our immediate instinct is to call attention to the inherent bias such a photo conveys, to address the fact that the Arabs in Gaza have provoked such reactions and, on a broader level, to put the current uprising in perspective of the Arab-Israel conflict. Yet none of that speaks to the sense of sadness one feels when acknowledging the difficult and disturbing role of Israeli soldiers today. One recalls the words of Golda Meir, that while she could forgive the Arabs for killing Israeli soldiers, she could never forgive them for making killers out of Israeli young men.

The Miracle Today

The parallels between the Chanukah story and the current struggle of the Jews of the USSR are striking. How the Maccabees prevailed against their mighty oppressors, and the Soviet Jews have struggled to maintain their identity and gain their freedom in the face of imprisonment. How the message of Chanukah, contained in the symbol of the small cruse of oil that burned for eight days, is in the belief that hope and prayer can prevail against all odds.

It is important to be mindful of that miracle in the wake of the natural letdown facing Soviet Jewry activists now. For despite the largest Jewish rally ever held in Washington, the gates of emigration have not opened wide. And according to the *New York Times* account of Reagan's first talk last Monday with Gorbachev, when the President advanced the cause of human rights and mentioned that 200,000 Americans had marched on behalf of Soviet Jewry the day before, the Soviet leader responded with anger.

"I told the President: 'I'm not on trial here, and you're not a judge

to judge me,'" Gorbachev told a group of publishers the next day. Another account had him saying, "You're not the prosecutor and I'm not the accused."

To date, then, there have been no miracles. And we should not expect them. Rather we must continue our efforts — the same efforts that have helped several hundred thousand Soviet Jews leave for Israel and freedom over the last two decades. And we should be comforted and inspired by the Chanukah candles we light this week, seeing in their glow the conviction that action makes a difference.

Indeed, there is an age-old question: what was the miracle of the first day of Chanukah — since there was enough oil to burn for one day? And one of the most satisfying answers given is that the miracle was in the faith that it took to light the menorah, knowing there was not enough to last.

As we dedicate our prayers this week to our brethren who remain oppressed, let us acknowledge the miracle: that they have kindled the first light by taking up the struggle. And may we be inspired to continue that struggle on their behalf.



LETTERS

Commitment To Oak Park

Today, Cong. B'nai Moshe is in the hub of the Jewish community. The demographics of Oak Park has remained at 40 percent Jewish population throughout the years. We have always had Orthodox, Conservative and Reform synagogues and temples. All of us must reach an understanding as to the needs of the Jewish community.

It is apparent at Cong. B'nai Moshe that President Robert Roth and "energetic" Rabbi Meyerowitz (who has a four-month tenure) do not have a clear understanding of our Jewish community ("The Energizer" Dec. 4).

We cannot continue to build synagogues in other areas and abandon our fellow Jews in Oak Park. This must stop!

The federal government, through the Department of Transportation, has provided our Jewish community with landscaped decks and play areas over the I-696 freeway. One of those decks is to the rear of Cong. B'nai Moshe, and the other deck will be constructed in 1988 behind the Federation Apartments. These decks are built to preserve our Jewish community for access to synagogues and temples. Otherwise, we would have a "ditch" through Oak Park.

We are the only community in the United States where this phenomenon has happened. The U.S. government is fulfilling their commitment, but where is the commitment to the City of Oak Park by Cong. B'nai Moshe? It took many trips to Washington, D.C. to ensure and save these federal commitments to the

tune of \$96 million for the decks and \$7.5 million for the third unit of senior citizens housing at Federation Apartments in Oak Park.

Is the new rabbi aware of the continuing support of the Jewish Welfare Federation to Oak Park with the recently instituted "Neighborhood Project?"

I would hope that the leadership at Cong. B'nai Moshe would begin to think positively. Our Jewish community is an integral part of Oak Park. Look at Nine Mile, Ten Mile, Coolidge and Lincoln to see the viability. The Jewish Community Center serves the community and is planning an expansion. I would consider this a strong commitment to our community of Oak Park.

Cong. B'nai Moshe must continue to serve our people and continue to invest in our

"Family City." We in city government are prepared to help.

Mayor Charlotte M. Rothstein,
Oak Park

Inspirational Experience

My wife and I were privileged to participate in the freedom demonstration in Washington, D.C. It was the most moving and inspirational event in my life.

Approximately 1,000 Jews from our area, Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and secular all went as one. Our community which has shown serious signs of division was in complete harmony.

Two hundred thousand people from across the country also went as one. Many of us were friends before this event, but we all came back closer

with many new friendships formed.

I compliment the Jewish Welfare Federation for this incredible experience.

Harvey Bronstein
Southfield

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Let Us Know

The Jewish News welcomes letters from our readers on subjects of concern to the Jewish community.

Letters must be concise, typewritten and double-spaced. Correspondence must include the signature, home address and daytime phone number of the writer.

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