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West Side Institutional Review

Vol. XXVII, No. 8

December 20, 1963

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4 Teves, 5724

THE SYNAGOGUE DEFINED

On Seating and Sanctification

By Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveichik

This is the question which has been raised: Lately there has been a great increase in the number of synagogues where men and women sit together. Many of them are attended by Jews who designate themselves as Orthodox. Shall Orthodox Judaism then consider such synagogues as an inevitable development, and become reconciled to them? Or must it assume a militant stand against them?

To make absolutely clear my position on this laden question I would like to relate this incident:

A young man moved into a suburb of Boston, where the only existent synagogue had men and women sitting together. He asked me what he should do on the High Holy Days, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Until then, on account of the mixed seating, he had not entered the synagogue; but on the Days of Awe he was very reluctant to remain at home. I answered him that it were better for him to pray at home both Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, and not cross the threshold of that synagogue. A few days later he telephoned me again; he had met the man who was to sound the shofar in that synagogue, and this man had warned him that, if he did not come to the synagogue he simply would not hear the shofar at all, for the man would not sound the shofar again, privately, for his benefit. The young man practically implored me that I grant him permission to enter the edifice, at least for a half hour, that he might hear the shofar blasts. I hesitated not for a moment, but directed him to remain at home. It would be better not to hear the shofar than to enter a synagogue whose sanctity has been profaned.

My stringent position regarding the mingling of men and women, arises from several reasons:

First of all, such mingling is forbidden according to the halacha. In certain instances Biblical law prohibits praying in a synagogue where men and women are seated together. Such a locale has none of the sanctity of a syna-

(Continued on Page 2)

SEDRAH TO BE EXPOUNDED FRIDAY NIGHT, DECEMBER 20th

Rabbi Morton Garfiel will interpret the Sedrah of the week based on the classic commentators tonight at 7:45 o'clock. Cantor Ellner will lead in Zemiros at the Oneg Shabbat. Refreshments. All welcome.

CONGRATULATIONS



Samuel W. Siegel

Heartiest good wishes to our 1st Vice-President, Mr. Samuel W. Siegel, upon his 70th birthday. May he enjoy many years of good health and happiness in his creative service to our community and people.

COLLEGIATES' REUNION FRIDAY NIGHT, DECEMBER 20th

Our Collegiates are cordially welcome to attend a Reunion at the home of Rabbi and Mrs. O. Asher Reichel, 230 West 79th Street, this evening, at 8:30 o'clock. Our out-of-townners will be most welcome.

Mr. Lawrence Kobrin, Chairman of the Campus Commission of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, will be our guest.

Contributions to Religious and Educational Organizations are TAX DEDUCTIBLE to the extent of 30% of your income.

To take advantage of this benefit for this year, payments should be made on or before December 31st, 1963.

Honor Roll

As we approach Sunday, January 5th, the date of our famed Opera Benefit, we wish to thank our members and friends for their cooperation and encouragement in the sale of the 3,500 seats of the Metropolitan Opera House — a tremendous task indeed.

Special bouquets to our Opera Chairman, Herman H. Cohen, and Co-Chairmen, Jacob Kaplan and Alexander Rauchman (Mr. Rauchman sold over 1,500 tickets), as well as to their fellow top salesmen: Messrs. Samuel K. Beier, Abe Glaser, Jacob Goldberg, H. William Hirsch, Dr. Godel Hunter, Morris Levine, Murray Rosenberg, Max J. Zimmer and Mmes. Anna Diamond, Max Kochen, Rose Schwager, Jennie Slayton and Isidor Scharfman.

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The Synagogue*(Continued from Page 1)*

gogue; any prayers offered there are worthless in the eyes of the Jewish law.

Secondly, the separation of the sexes in the synagogue derives historically from the Sanctuary, where there were both a Court of Women and a Court of Israelites. In its martyr's history of a thousand years, the people of Israel have never violated this sacred principle. Moreover, when primitive Christianity arose as a sect in the Holy Land, and began to slowly introduce reforms, one of the innovations which the sect established at once in the externals of synagogue practice, was to have men and women sit together.

In many instances mixed-seating was the unmistakable sign by which a Jew could recognize that he had found not a place of sanctity for Jews to pray, but rather a prayerhouse for a deviating sect; for in those times the Christians had not yet formally differentiated themselves from traditional Jewry. As a secret sect they endeavored to hide their identity, and only through certain definite signs could they be recognized.

It would seem to me that our remembrance of history alone should keep us from imitating today the practice of primitive Christianity almost 1900 years ago.

Thirdly, the entire concept of "family-pews" is in contradiction to the Jewish spirit of prayer. Prayer means communion with the Master of the World, and therefore withdrawal from all and everything. During prayer man must feel alone, removed, isolated. He must then regard the Creator as the only Friend, from whom alone he can hope for support and consolation. Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their Master, as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes look unto the Lord our G-d, until He be gracious unto us (Psalms 123:2).

Clearly, the presence of women among men, or of men among women, which

MEN'S CLUB

Have you contacted your friends, neighbors, business acquaintances for contributions of merchandise for the Annual Bazaar which will be conducted jointly with the Mr. & Mrs. League! Packages should be addressed to "Bazaar Committee." Call the Synagogue office and we will pick up the packages if necessary.

Men's Club meetings are held on the first and third Mondays of the month.

often evokes a certain frivolity in the group, either in spirit or in behavior, can contribute little to sanctification or to the deepening of religious feeling; nor can it help instill that mood in which a man must be immersed when he would communicate with the Almighty. Out of the depths have I called Thee, O Lord (Psalms 130:1), says the Psalmist. Such a state of being will not be realized amid "family-pews."

In my opinion, Orthodoxy must mobilize all its forces and wage an indefatigable battle against the "christianization" (I have no other name for it) of the synagogue — a process which is being accomplished by people who possess no sense of halachah and no historical-philosophical concept of the nature of prayer; but they do have the arrogance to wreck principles and traditions which have become hallowed through blood and tears.

And I do not believe this battle will be a lost one.

In the mingled seating of women and men I see no progressive idea which should appeal to the person of culture. The American Jew, though he is ignorant in matters of Jewish law, has a great amount of common sense, and a certain intellectual honesty. I am convinced that if the Jewish public were to be truly enlightened on this matter, it would react quite differently to this reprehensible reform. It would understand that the separation of men and women implies not disrespect or contempt for women, as the representatives of the half-reform camp would interpret. On the contrary, it is based on the Jewish sense of modesty, a sense identical with the attitude of reverence for Diety, a sense which the Judaism of Abraham and Sarah have shown toward woman as the mother and builder of the people Israel. When they, the angels, said unto him: Where is Sarah thy wife? Abraham simply replied, Behold in the tent (Genesis 18:9).

In practical terms, Orthodoxy has three tasks: (1) to conduct a program of education through the oral and the written word; (2) to morally support those individual laymen and rabbis who often give themselves in self-sacrifice to a battle for the sanctity of the syna-

gogue. Mostly, an action for reform will begin with the obstinacy of one despot in the brotherhood or sisterhood. Were the observant Jews well organized, and if they but had a more aggressive attitude, the reform could, in many instances, be averted. (3) Orthodox organizations should undertake to build synagogues in the suburbs and new communities where Jews are settling. If the various synagogue organizations . . . would concentrate on organizing new synagogues and Jewish communities in America, they could accomplish much.

We have not yet lost the battle, for we have not yet begun to fight. We have but abandoned the synagogue, much as the French abandoned Paris (during World War II) before the Germans fired the very first shot. Even today, however, we can yet defend our positions — if we will but have the determination. We must have the will to give battle, for the synagogue is the center of Jewish communal life in this country. No movement or organization is as strong as the synagogue. When we lose a House of Prayer we lose a strategic position. A right battle for principles is always a worthy and honorable endeavor.

Gird thy sword upon thy thigh . . . prosper, ride on, in behalf of truth (Psalms 45:4-5).

*From the book, "The Sanctity
of the Synagogue"
— it may be ordered
through our office.*

YESHIVA HAICHEL HATORAH DINNER, SUNDAY, JAN. 19th

Trustee Abraham M. Druckman has been designated Honorary Chairman of the Annual Dinner of our neighboring Yeshiva Haichel Hatorah, which will take place at the Riverside Plaza Hotel on Sunday, January 19th. The Guests of Honor at the Dinner will be our neighboring Rabbis Aaron Soloveichik and Dr. H. Raphael Gold. This Yeshiva is unique in that it is concerned with teen-age boys having limited or no Jewish educational background. The school and dormitory are located on Riverside Drive corner 140th Street. Kindly call AU 3-6000 for reservations (\$36 per couple).

W.S.I.S. PRAYER SCHEDULE*Friday, December 20th*

Light Candles Before4:13
 Mincha4:20

Saturday, December 21st

Morning Service9:00
 Sedra: Vayigash
 Junior Congregation10:45
 Rabbi Pekier's Talmud Class.....2:55
 Mr. Isaac Allen's Talmud Class.....2:55
 Mincha3:55
 Reader of Service: Mervyn Frankel
 Reader of Torah:
 Abraham Kraushar
 Seuda Shlishis
 Host: Mr. Jacob Frankel
 Sabbath Terminates5:12

Week of December 22nd

Sun. & Legal Day.....7:15, 8:15, 8:45
 Monday Morning6:45, 7:45, 8:30
 Tues. & Fri.6:45, 7:45, 8:15
 Mincha Daily4:20
 Thursday — Asara Beteves Fast
 Morning Slichos6:30, 8:10
 Morning Services6:45, 7:30, 8:30
 Mincha — Vayechal4:00
 Wednesday Nights — Rabbi Pekier's
 Talmud Class8:00

Friday, December 27th

Light Candles Before4:17
 Mincha4:20

Saturday, December 28th

Morning Service9:00
 Sedra: Vayechi
 Junior Congregation10:45
 Rabbi Pekier's Talmud Class.....3:00
 Mr. Allen's Talmud Class.....3:00
 Mincha4:00
 Reader of Service: Larry Hecht
 Reader of Torah: Mervyn Frankel
 Seuda Shlishis
 Host: Mr. Daniel Pressner
 Sabbath Terminates5:16

Week of December 29th

Sun. & Legal Day.....7:15, 8:15 8:45
 Mon. & Thurs.6:45, 7:45, 8:30
 Tues. & Fri.6:45, 7:45, 8:15
 Mincha Daily4:25

Friday, January 3rd

Light Candles Before4:23
 Mincha4:30

CONDOLENCES

We sorrowfully record the passing of the following of our Congregational Family and extend our deepest sympathy to their dear ones:

Elsie Borg Goldsmith — mother of our member and Mr. & Mrs. League member, Mr. Warren R. Goldsmith.

Erna Isacowitz — mother of our member, Mr. Robert Brodheim.

Bessie Mitchell — sister of Mr. Harry Burak.

Charles A. Silver — brother of our member, Mr. Henry Silver.

Simon Woods — father of Mr. Lester Woods.

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○ ○ ○

**Reserve Monday, March 9th
 for our annual
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NEW MEMBERS WELCOME

We are delighted to notice new faces at our services. We trust that our regular worshippers will welcome the newcomers and make them feel at home.

JUNIOR CONGREGATION

All children between the age of 7 and 12 are welcome Saturday mornings at 10:45 o'clock at the Junior Congregation. Everybody who attends is given an opportunity to participate. Refreshments are served at the conclusion of the services.

Michael Widlanski was elected President, Alan Weiss, Vice President, and Cathy Weiss, Hostess.

A modern Ritualarium (Mikvah) is located in our community, at 158 W. 97th St., MO 3-0300.

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 JACOB KINZLER2nd Vice-President
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 HAROLD KAPLANAsst. Treas. & Exec. Dir.
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Men's Club and Mr. & Mrs. League Bazaar Committee

GETTING PERSONAL

By Sanford Solarz

The Congregational Chanukah Party last Saturday night was not only oversubscribed, but was also an overwhelming success, thanks to the efforts of our Mr. & Mrs. League Committee, headed by its President, Mrs. Samuel Gursky, and Mmes. Abraham Cohen, Daniel Gribetz, O. Asher Reichel, Eugene Ten Brink and all their co-workers . . . Mazel tov to Morris Wexler and Mathilde Ephron upon their marriage which was solemnized in our Synagogue; to our members, Mr. & Mrs. George A. Gold, upon the birth of Benjamin Zev to their children, Dr. & Mrs. Herschel Gold; to Mr. & Mrs. Norman Liberman upon the birth of a daughter to their children, Rabbi & Mrs. Barnett Liberman . . . Ye Columnist's son, Steven, authored a feature article in the November issue of the "Greater Philadelphia Magazine", entitled "Philadelphia Jewry in a Coat of Many Colors", a study in breadth and depth of Jewish life in Philadelphia from Colonial days to the present . . . Happy vacationing in Florida to Trustee and Mrs. Jacob Goodman . . . Our prayers for a refuah shlaymo to Mrs. Simon Klein and Mrs. Al D. Myers . . . Trustee Henry Hirsch is serving again as Chairman of the Annual Yeshiva Torah Vodaath Dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on January 12th . . . Mazel Tov to Trustee, Dr. and Mrs. Samuel Greenberg and to Trustee and Mrs. Moses Langer upon the Bar Mitzvah of their grandson, Howard Israel Langer, son of their children, Mr. and Mrs. Morton Langer.

TEEN-AGERS

All our teen-agers are invited to a gathering in our Game Room on Sunday, December 22nd, at 11:15 A.M.

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* * *

Happy Anniversary to the:

Harry Cohens, Herman H. Cohens, Samuel Diamonds, William Fishers, Joseph Friedmans, Abraham M. Goldbergs, Dezso Goldners, Fred Goldsteins, Aaron W. Gross's, Herman B. Gross's, Max M. Horowitzs, Max Kleins, Joseph Landownes, Harold Levines, Aaron Neustadters, Harry Perlman's, Irving Sabsevitzs, Aaron M. Schreibers, Louis Weinsteins, Lynton Wieners and David Williams's.

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