

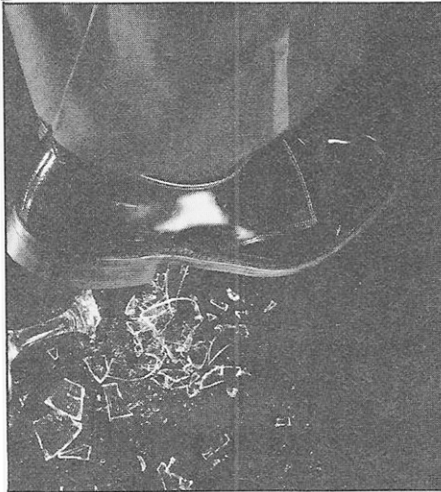
Should There Be Jews?

Back in the time of the Maccabees, a lot of Jews said no. Why should there be Jews? The culture of the conquerors, Hellenistic culture, offered every man a chance to be a citizen of the world—a cosmopolitan, to use the Greek term. And contemporary culture offers us the same.

A corollary question might be: Why read JEWISH LIVING? Why not stick to *Cosmopolitan*, or *Esquire*? These magazines offer an updated, simplified version of the Hellenistic values that ruled the world of the second century B.C.E. Self-help, self-realization, physical fitness, art for art's sake, higher consciousness, the joy of sex, self-expression: beneath the hyphenated hype, there is a core of healthiness to this me-first culture—essentially the same core that, beneath the idolatry and idle wealth, made Hellenism so attractive to the upper classes of ancient Israel. To them, as to some of us, traditional Judaism seemed a narrow, unappealing thing in comparison. When secular science, art, and sensualism offer fulfillment for all, why bother to keep the faith?

The Maccabees bothered—went to considerable bother. Their reasoning was simple: what God says goes. But today the most secularized sophisticate can be grateful for their effort. Because Judaism stayed alive, it has been able, during the past two thousand years, to cross-fertilize the Greek stock of Western civilization with another vital strain. The passion for justice, concern for others—and the recognition that without concern for others self-concern is self-defeating: these are, in large part, Jewish contributions. So is a sense of the sacredness of the written word, and the indispensability of law. So is the conviction that, partly through our own efforts, the world will someday be a good neighborhood.

A fine sermon, you say, and maybe it proves that there should in fact be Jews. But why should *I* be one? What's in it for me? That's a fair question. The answer more and more people are discovering is that nothing does more for your self-realization, self-expression, or self-whatever than a little Jewish living. You can get some idea of what I'm talking about by just flipping through the magazine.



Our cover story, Howard Eisenberg's unveiling of the Jewish wedding in America, reveals a return from the fads and fripperies of the past decade to the ancient beauties of tradition. A primer in the appreciation of those beauties is Yitz Greenberg's "Tying the Knot: A Step-by-Step Guide." In "Coping With Santa Claus" the Borosons talk of a time of year when you wonder, not whether there *should* be Jews, but whether there *are* any. Their solution—doing Chanukah up right, not as a Yiddish yuletide but as a vibrant holiday in its own right—is easily implemented with the aid of the Chanukah lore set

festively forth in the rest of this special section. Also in this issue are Dan Rottenberg's progress report on anti-Semitism in big business, and Richard Nowitz's photo essay on Jerusalem's oldest, newest, and most beautiful neighborhood.

This issue inaugurates several new departments. "My Brother's Keeper"—the name explains itself—begins by reporting on the plight of the Jews of Argentina. "Sagas" records the experiences of people caught in the tides and tempests of recent history. In a third new department, Jewish men and women talk about their "Callings;" in this issue you'll meet a mohel from Minneapolis. Our familiar features, by the way, are safe and sound; food, for example, is back in ample portions—from a cornucopia of Thanksgiving delicacies to a conclusive demonstration that variety is the spice of latkes.

A final note: In the wedding piece you'll read of a California couple who set apart a slice of the money allotted for their wedding as a donation to help the Southeast-Asian refugees. The point is well taken. Forty years ago *we* were the boat people, and the world's hearts and harbors were closed to us. We can't let that happen again—not to us, not to anyone.

Happy Chanukah.

L. Aryeh Rubin
Editor and Publisher

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