

Candles Burn This Week for Fighting Jews

By GEORGE CORNELL, Associated Press Religion Writer
Candles burn today for the fighting Jew.

Down through history, Jews are seen as the people that are helplessly persecuted, exiled, segregated and slain, but there is another aspect to the story—the fighting Jew who won't give up, no matter what the odds.

That's the chapter being celebrated today in the annual Hanukkah observance.

It marks a stubborn, heroic, three-year war of 2,165 years ago by small, ill-supplied Jewish forces to save their religion. They whipped the mightiest army then on earth.

Contemporary Footnote
This year, there's a contemporary footnote to the image of the Jewish warrior.

In the Middle East, Israel has shown her fighting mettle. Whether one likes or dislikes her conduct, she got started by fighting off forces outnumbering her 100-1 then warded off harassing forays, and lately carried out what she terms a reprisal invasion.

"Many people are saying that Israel has produced a new brand of Jew," said Rabbi Samuel M. Silver, of New York. "Actually, the fighting Jew is not a novelty at all."

"The Jew finds violence repugnant...but when he is armed with an important cause, when his patience has been exhausted, and when he has some military material...the Jew can fight."

First Religious War
And fight, he did, back there from 165 to 167 B.C., in the world's first great war for religious freedom.

It is in memory of the soldiers of that war that the candles burn today in Jewish synagogues and temples, songs are sung, pageants staged, tiffs exchanged, and this prayer spoken:

"Not by might, but by thy power."

It is stressed that God, not human efforts alone, achieve that ancient victory, and that he is the key to attainment of all high objectives.

Observed on Thursday
The observance began at sunset Wednesday and lasts until next Thursday night.

Military authorities still view that long-past Jewish revolt as the prototype of successful guerrilla warfare, carried out from mountains and woods, by lightning strikes, finally shattering vastly superior forces.

Its main leader, Judas Maccabaeus, is considered a tactical genius.

He and the other Maccabean brothers, Jonathan and Simon, pitted their motley troops against the armies of Syrian King Antiochus IV, who had tried to compel the Jews to be pagans—and abandon their idea of one supreme God.

"Judaism—and also Christianity—could not be alive today were it not for these efforts," said Dr. Maurice N. Eisenstath, president of the American Hebrew Congregations.

Preserved Monotheism
For by preserving monotheism, an isolated faith in a world of pagan myths, Judaism gave Christianity the foundation for its birth, 165 years later.

If military arms alone had ruled the day, that foundation would have been destroyed.

Antiochus, ruler half of the old Greek Empire, had pagan idols set up in every township in Palestine, and sacrifices to the mythological Greek god, Zeus, made at the main altar of the holy temple in Jerusalem.

"Abomination of desolation," cried the Jews.

Four Five to Hills
One old priest, Mattathias, hurled himself against an official who was trying to compel Jews to worship a pagan idol and killed him. This started it. With his three sons, the Maccabees, he fled to the hills.

Volunteers gathered for the uprising, and the war was on. It lasted three years, and at the end, the Jews had won their religious freedom, the temple was cleansed—and the worship of one God above went on...and on.

Legend says the temple lamps burned for eight days on an amount of oil that normally would have lasted only one day.

'Festival of Lights'
So, in the eight-day commemoration of that occasion, the candles glow in what is sometimes called "The festival of lights."

The first Hanukkah candles were lit at sunset Wednesday in thousands of Jewish synagogues and homes. An additional one is lit each evening until on the final day, eight burn in the tapers of the "menorah"—a special candelabrum.

While the celebration gives the glory to God for the preservation of the faith against tyranny, it also recalls that fighting Jew, a figure often overlooked in the long record of Jewish oppression and disaster.

Many died in the medieval church "Inquisition." Czarist Russia carried out mass pogroms against Jews. Hitler burned or slaughtered millions.

While Jews loathe violence, Rabbi Silver said, "The time does come when he will be so strongly motivated by his idealism that he will be endowed with special strength for the achievement of noble ends."

The United Nations FOA reports that Central America faces an estimated 100 per cent population increase in the next 20 years.

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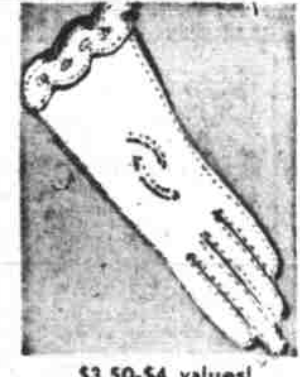
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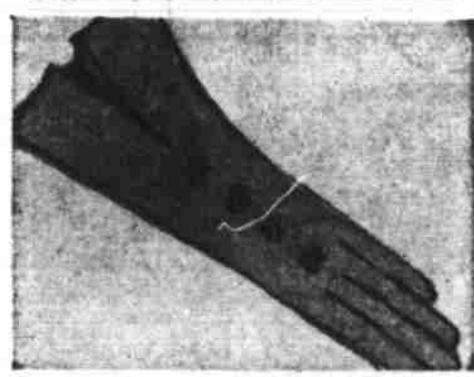
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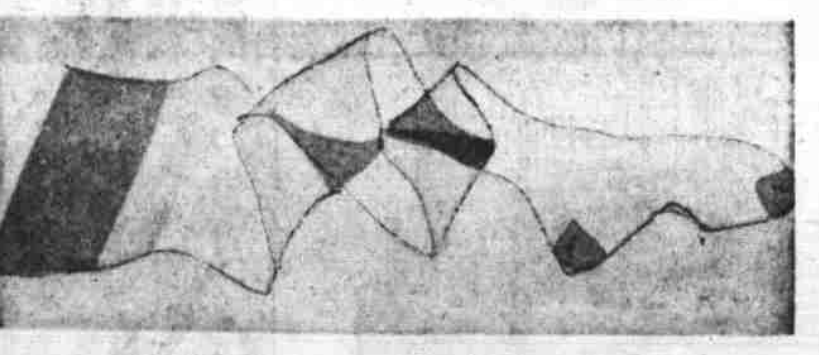
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