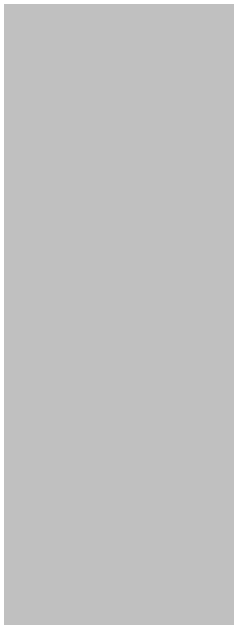


Temple Beth Sholom  
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New City, NY 10956  
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## January 2002

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### From the Desk of Rabbi David E. Fass

[I believe the material that follows is a long-overdue attempt to redress one of the most blatantly anti-Semitic acts of our time: the refusal of the International Red Cross to recognize its Israeli arm, the Magen David Adom, the Red Star of David. This has taken place at the instigation of the Arab nations and their equivalent, the Red Crescent, who have chosen politics and bias over humanitarian aid to all people who are in need. -- David Fass]

A Tragedy - Red Cross Double Cross

By Lawrence S. Eagleburger

Tuesday, October 30, 2001, The Washington Post. Page A21

Dr. Bernadine Healy's resignation as president of the American Red Cross is a tragedy. This remarkable woman has, in less than two years, forced major reforms on a reluctant governing body and shown superb crisis management skills in the aftermath of the terrible events of Sept. 11.

But this is not all she should be remembered for. Healy, shortly after she took office, discovered that the American Red Cross had acquiesced for decades in the policy of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to oppose accepting Magen David Adom as a legitimate emblem of the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross. She rightly saw this as, at best, turning a blind eye on a moral wrong; in an act of great moral courage, she set about to put things right. She spoke against the federation's anti-Israeli stance in Geneva, the home of the federation, and stirred up a hornet's nest of denials of wrongdoing, complaints against her lack of diplomatic finesse and charges that her

methods just "weren't done" in Geneva.

When it became obvious that the federation (and most of its member states) were not going to change their ways, Healy settled in for a long and sometimes nasty battle. She made it clear to the federation and her own board that the American Red Cross was no longer prepared to accept in silence a policy that was inimical to our deepest held values and that put the lie to the federation's claims of universality.

As a part of Healy's preparations for a strategic approach to the fight to force the federation to forswear its discriminatory policy against Israel, she asked me to accept appointment as ambassador at large (a high sounding but unpaid and powerless position), and to advise her when she felt the need for advice. I accepted, went several times to Geneva on her behalf and saw at firsthand the conspiracy of silence and obfuscation deployed against the American Red Cross's efforts to at least get the issue thoroughly aired before members of the federation and the public.

I suggested to Healy that withholding dues to the federation was a useful way to force the federation to take the American Red Cross's demands seriously; Healy agreed, and the funds were withheld, with the approval of the board. At the time, I warned Healy that support for this aggressive policy would begin to diminish over time as the weak of heart, and those who really did not care much if the discrimination against Israel continued, listened to the blandishments of the federation's bureaucrats and politicians, who would argue that a hard-line American approach would never accomplish its objective, while compromise and goodwill could eventually accomplish much.

I recently sent Healy a memorandum that laid out the issues as I saw them:

"The refusal of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to reverse its long-standing opposition to accepting Magen David Adom as a legitimate emblem of the Israeli Red Cross equivalent is, and has been from the inception of this exclusionary policy, immoral. As such it has no place in an organization which purports to be philanthropic in its purposes, and caring for the least of us in its practices.

"That the exclusion of Magen David Adom has continued for decades without strong objection from the American Red Cross has raised legitimate questions about our commitment to the fundamentals of the Red Cross movement, and to the principles that guide American foreign policy. It is for those reasons that I recommended that the American Red Cross withhold its dues from the Federation. We have no business supporting an immoral policy that looks and smells too much like the infamous policies of the 1930s and 1940's...

"As certain as night follows day we can expect that bureaucrats from the Federation will do all they can to persuade leading Americans to force President Healy... to return to discredited policies.

"They must not succeed! At a time when the United States and the civilized world are at war with extremism, it would be an inexcusable mistake for a leading humanitarian organization like the American Red Cross to succumb to political pressure and drop its principled opposition to policies of exclusion and intolerance,"

But "they" have succeeded. Last week Healy was forced out of office by a behind-closed-doors vote of the American Red Cross's Board of Governors -- not because of anything relating to the Sept. 11 tragedy but because she dared to try to right a wrong -- the wrong of denying a sovereign nation equality because of its ethnicity. The weak and easily persuaded had indeed succumbed to the blandishments of the sophisticated federation apologists who are so adept at making a wolf look like a sheep. Before long the American Red Cross, under its new and surely more "moderate" leadership, will return to paying its dues and "cooling it" on the issue of granting Magen David Adom the equality justice demands.

Those of us who, like Healy, believe that the American Red Cross must represent the best of our nation have lost not just a battle but a war. -----Lawrence S. Eagleburger

(The writer is a former Secretary of State.)  
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[The sender of this message writes:] "As a result of this, whenever I receive a letter from the Red Cross soliciting funds, I will send a note back in their postpaid envelope stating that, since Israel's Magen David Adom is not recognized by the organization, until this wrong is corrected I will withhold any contributions and will advise everyone I know to do the same.

If you agree, please send this to everyone on your list. It may help get Magen David Adom back on the funded list of that organization."

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## Cantor's Notes

In the cycle of the Jewish calendar there are a few Shabbatot that are mentioned specifically by name. One of them is Shabbat Shirah, the Sabbath of Song, which is celebrated this month on January 25. When we read Parashat B'shalach, we recall the song that Moses, Miriam and the People of Israel sang after crossing the Sea of Reeds. The song is joyous and filled with a renewed faith in God's power to redeem His people. After hundreds of years of bitter slavery in Egypt the Israelites finally taste the first moments of Freedom. Overcome with emotion, they burst into song: "I will sing unto God for God has triumphed gloriously. Horse and driver God has driven into the Sea." The most famous line of the Song at the Sea (Shirat Hayam) is Mi Chamocha Baelim Adonai... "Who is like You, Eternal One, among the gods that are worshipped? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in splendor, doing wonders?" No song has greater meaning and significance for us as Jews than this one. Just as the readings of the Haggadah at the Passover Seder reenacts the Exodus from Egypt, the chanting of Shirat Hayam (Song at the Sea) returns us to the dramatic experience of the Israelites uttering songs of liberation.

Music is often the vehicle that stirs our collective Consciousness. On this Shabbat we journey backwards in Time reliving a crucial event in our people's history.

Today in American Synagogues it is customary to mark the occasion of Shabbat Shirah with an expanded musical service. Our Temple will not be an exception. On January 25 I would like to invite you to our Shabbat Shirah. It will include our choirs and special musical guests who will help to enhance our service. Please come and celebrate with us.

B'shalom uv'shirah  
In peace and in song  
Cantor Sergei Schwartz

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