

Rabbi to Give Nixon a Kingly Blessing

By ISRAEL SHENKER

The rabbi who will pray for President Nixon at the inauguration tomorrow plans to pronounce the blessing that the Talmud prescribes when one sees a king and his court.

Since Mr. Nixon is not a king, Rabbi Seymour Siegel has decided to pronounce the blessing in a special way—but not special enough to forestall criticism for his choice of blessing or for his participation in a ceremony carried by loudspeakers, radio and television on the Jewish Sabbath.

Rabbi Siegel intends to say the first words, "Blessed art thou" in the original Hebrew, then switch to English for the words "... O Lord our God, King of the universe," and finally revert to Hebrew for "who has given of Thy glory to flesh and blood."

Rabbi Siegel, a Conservative Jew, explained in an interview that he observant do not use the name of the Lord in vain or in disputed circumstances. Since some might object to the literary license in speaking of kingly glory for a President, Rabbi Siegel plans to avoid the majesty of Hebrew—which has what he

termed "liturgical status"—mention of God.

His Reform colleague, Rabbi Edgar F. Magnin, who prayed at the 1969 inauguration, and who will help officiate at an ecumenical service following tomorrow's inauguration, said that the blessing on seeing a king is inappropriate.

"Of course you could twist anything," Rabbi Magnin observed. "But this blessing reflects the age of monarchy when a king was high and mighty and you kow-towed to him. There's nothing there that could apply to an elected official."

Violation Held Likely

Rabbi Israel Klavan, executive vice president of the (Orthodox) Rabbinical Council of America, said there was "likelihood" of a violation of Jewish law in Rabbi Siegel's Sabbath role.

Chapter 35 of Exodus says, "You shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations on the Sabbath Day." Rabbi Klavan suggested that this prohibition, by extension, probably applies to the use of loudspeakers, radio and television.

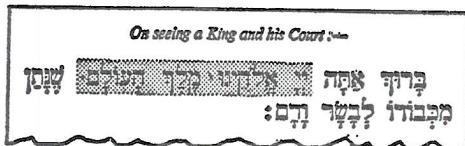
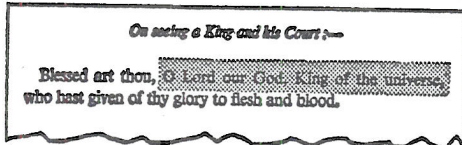
Many Conservative and Reformed synagogues, and even some Orthodox synagogues,

use loudspeakers in Sabbath services, and not every Orthodox rabbi agrees with Rabbi Klavan's interpretation. The last inauguration held on a Saturday was Franklin D. Roosevelt's, in 1945. None of the many authorities consulted could recall the use of the kingly blessing at an inauguration on any day whatsoever.

Rabbi Siegel, a professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary here, will avoid other possible violations of the Sabbath by traveling to Washington before the Sabbath begins, and by walking—not riding—from his hotel to the inauguration.

The White House will provide a military aide to accompany him, and has promised there will be kosher food at his hotel and at the White House luncheon after the ceremony.

Rabbi Siegel, who has described himself as "an active worker in the campaign" for President Nixon's re-election, will be one of the four clergymen to pray at the ceremony. The others are Cardinal Cooke, who is Roman Catholic; the Rev. E. V. Hill, who is Baptist; and Archbishop Iakovos, who is Greek Orthodox.



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Shading indicates area in which rabbi plans to switch from Hebrew to English