

The Jewish Vote

By ANTHONY LEWIS

One troubling aspect of the 1972 campaign is the vulgar courting of the "Jewish vote." President Nixon's strategists say happily that many more Jews will vote Republican this year, and the pro-Nixon announcements of some Jewish leaders support that claim. Senator McGovern, for his part, has countered by telling Jewish audiences that he can do better for them.

No people should feel altogether comfortable with political appeals implying that they think and act as a bloc. Jews least of all. The idea has sinister anti-Semitic overtones in history. And in fact Jews are the least sheeplike of people, stubbornly individualistic in religion and life.

Still, there are themes in the Jewish consciousness that help to shape general political outlook. It would be surprising if people with such a tormented history were to forget its significance, and Jews on the whole certainly do not. Indeed, remembrance is one note in the observance of the High Holydays now taking place.

Three themes in particular can be identified: A respect for scholarship and intellect, a concern for justice, compassion. The first not only from the long Jewish scholarly tradition but because of the contemporary lesson that anti-intellectualism accompanies tyranny. The second because those who have experienced injustice and persecution will naturally fear what Felix Frankfurter called "the knock at the door." The last because those who have lived a minority for generations have a reason for sympathy with all minorities, with the poor and the weak and the alien.

Those beliefs have affected American Jewish voting patterns. Jews tend to vote Republican more often as they become more affluent—but not so much as other groups. As the Ameri-

can Jewish Committee's Institute of Human Relations said in a recent analysis, "Jews have yielded less than others to present economic status." They have leaned toward liberal candidates, likely to be identified with intellect, justice and compassion.

But this year, we are told, Jews are being moved from these general instincts by two particular concerns: Israel and black-white relations in America. Pat Buchanan, a White House assistant, put it frankly if crudely that Jews are feeling more like other ethnics: "They're protective of their turf."

There are reasons for those concerns. Most Jews understand now that their own survival is tied to Israel's, and the Arab terror at Munich re-emphasizes the need for vigilance. And Jews living in cities do feel a threat, economic and physical, from the growing militance of the black community.

The question is whether those immediate feelings should matter more than the deeper strains in Jewish thought. The answer for me is no.

Consider Israel. Is it in her long-run interest to be regarded primarily in military terms, as one element in an American balance of world power? Israel was founded to be a rock not only of Jewish strength but of Jewish idealism. It must not be just another small state, an American ally like the colonels' Greece or General Thieu's South Vietnam.

Nor should excesses in the name of the black cause make Jews forget that no society can be healthy while a substantial minority suffers and feels terrible grievances. Negroes in America start with psychological and social disabilities greater than other minorities', and the rest of us will have to help overcome them for our own sake. Least of all should Jews approve President Nixon's use of busing and other racial issues to arouse fear among whites for political purposes.

But the notion of a large Jewish turn to Mr. Nixon this November becomes really astonishing when his Administration is measured against the historic ideals of intellect, compassion and justice.

Not since Harding has there been a Government so devoid of intellectual content. The Wall Street Journal spoke of it as "by and large inhospitable to men of vision and intellect."

In the world, America's name once stood for compassion; this Administration has made it increasingly synonymous with inhumanity. Mr. Nixon stood by while his Pakistani allies raped the women and slaughtered the intellectuals of Bengal. Mr. Nixon has bombed and is bombing Indochina at a rate never before known in any war.

At home, by far the most menacing aspect of the Nixon Administration has been its subversion of the ideal of justice. It has brought a succession of political prosecutions; it has been caught out wiretapping again and again; it has tried to suppress newspapers and books; it is attempting to laugh off the extremely grave action of spying on the opposition party. And the President has made clear his intention to remake the Supreme Court in his image of freedom.

Many consider Louis Brandeis the outstanding intellect among all Supreme Court Justices. He was also a great Jew, a man of burning idealism and a Zionist when not everyone was. It was no accident that Justice Brandeis was at his most passionate in warning against officials who twist the law for their purposes, the "men of zeal" who follow the "pernicious doctrine" that the end justifies the means.

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