

WHY CHRISTMAS IS GOOD FOR AMERICA

By Don Feder

Mazel Tov to the season to be jolly

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I once interviewed Elyakim Haetzni, then a member of the Knesset, who told me that he always supported higher subsidies for religious education in Israel.

I was puzzled. “Elyakim, you said you’re an agnostic. Isn’t that a contradiction?” I asked. “Not at all,” he replied. “Even though I’m not a believer myself, I know that religion makes my country stronger.”

That’s how I feel about Christmas. I don’t celebrate the holiday, but I support its public celebration robustly. Christmas is something that brings us closer as a people.

This era is marked by relentless assaults on our institutions and traditions. Statues of historical figures as diverse as Stonewall Jackson and Theodore Roosevelt are removed from public display. At sports events, it’s become routine for players to refuse to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Students are taught to hate America through critical race theory and other educational indoctrination. The Supreme Court is under attack by partisans who fear it will overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

As a Jew, I have no problem with Christmas trees in parks or nativity scenes in front of city hall, whether or not they’re camouflaged with Santas and snowmen. They are reminders of our religious heritage.

America was founded on the Judeo-Christian ethic. A majority of Americans are Christians, to one degree or another. Our institutions are based on an ethos derived from Sinai and Bethlehem. The Founding Fathers spoke of rights endowed by our Creator and dated the Constitution Anno Domini (in the year of our Lord) 1776.

That's one of the things that makes the Left nervous about Christmas. It wants America to be a cosmopolitan land of rootlessness – united by nothing more than our location on the globe and a vague belief in democracy. That's why it cheers the alien horde surging across our southern border and purging Christmas from the public square. Anything that disunites us is good in its eyes.

As much as the Declaration of Independence or Constitution, Christmas unites us as a people.

According to a 2017 Pew poll, roughly 90% of Americans celebrate Christmas – probably more than any other holiday, including Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July. In a way, that makes Christmas a national holiday.

Christmas has a venerable lineage. Although the custom of the gaily festooned tree only goes back to the 19th century, the gift-giving tradition is said to be inspired by the wise men who journeyed to Bethlehem. I give not because I want something in return but as an expression of love.

Besides generosity, one of the holiday's chief appeals is hopefulness.

For North America, Christmas comes during a gloomy season that's brightened by colorful decorations and colorfully wrapped presents.

Optimism is a uniquely American virtue. The settlers came here seeking opportunity. Regardless of their station at birth, America gave them a chance for a fresh start.

Like Hanukkah, Christmas urges us to have hope for the future. Even though things look bleak, God will make it turn out right in the end.

One of the most popular songs of the season, which came out during the depths of World War II, speaks to that. "Christmas Eve will find me where the love light gleams. I'll be home for Christmas, if only in my dreams."

With our economy in the doldrums, crime surging and enemies everywhere – like the Star of Bethlehem and the Hanukkah menorah – Christmas points the way to hope.

More than anything else that is what I wish for my country.

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