Box 1, Folder 8, "The Power of You", 17 November 1957.
HOW WAS THE WORLD CREATED?


IN THEIR SYMBOLIC STYLE, THE RABBIS WERE STUDYING THE PROBLEM WHICH CONFRONTS US NOW SO VIVIDLY. THEY WERE IN FACT EXPLORING NOT THE QUESTION OF CREATION, BUT RATHER THE MORE SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM OF HOW TO CREATE A BETTER WORLD.

THE RABBI WHO MAINTAINED THAT THE WORLD IS BUILT FROM THE PERIPHERY INWARD, IMPLIED THAT WE MUST BUILD BETTER INSTITUTIONS IN SOCIETY IF WE ARE TO IMPROVE THE WORLD. THE OTHER SAGE BELIEVED THAT WE MUST START WITH INDIVIDUALS, CREATE SUPERIOR MEN AND WOMEN, THEY ARE AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD AND ARE ITS SOLUTION.

TODAY, MOST OF US WOULD SAY THAT THE TRUTH LIES IN BETWEEN THESE POLAR VIEWS. BOTH SUPERIOR INSTITUTIONS AND SUPERIOR INDIVIDUALS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF A MEANINGFUL WORLD.

BUT THIS IS A GOAL, AND A GOAL THAT OUR CIVILIZATION AND OUR NATION IS FAR FROM REALIZED. IN OUR TWENTIETH CENTURY INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY, GREAT EMPHASIS IS PLACED ON SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS. THEY HAVE BECOME ENDS IN THEMSELVES, AND MEN HAVE BECOME SUBORDINATE TO THEM. THE ASSEMBLY LINE AND AUTOMATION HAVE REDUCED MAN TO A SUBSIDIARY OF THE MACHINE. MAN IS DEPERSONALIZED. HE HAS BECOME ALL TOO FREQUENTLY A MEANS
Rather than an end in himself. Working men and women are callously referred to as "the hired hands," "the help" we "slit their throats.

In an excellent study of American life, Lyman Bryson, entitled "The Next America," he points out that we have entered the age of the great economy. America is built on great groups and vast ambitious institutions: there are large and complex political blocs, farm blocs, labor movements, business institutions, professional societies, and an almost endless variety of lobby groups. All of these, says Dr. Bryson, came into being as tools, instruments to serve us, but like a Frankenstein, they have managed to master us.

They pressure us to think in conformity, to dress, feed ourselves, seek our entertainment in a monotonous conformity. Industries train not only young Ivy-League executives but our survey revealed, insist, that their wives live up to certain vague company standards of superficial sociability.

Under the impact of these aggressive groups, the spiritual matrix of America, its prophetic appeal to the individualistic nature of man, has become transformed into a materialist-oriented society, whose standards are those of commerce, whose God is material success, and whose ritual is self-indulgence. It is little wonder that we stand in spiritual confusion before the orbiting Sputnik. As one cartoonist epitomized our dilemma: "They have their Sputnik, but we have our Edsel."

How does one react to this age of great collectives? How does one get restore his inner integrity, his power on inner unity?

Firstly, we must realize that these mass groups, these collectives, are good tools. We achieve most of our desires and purposes by group action.

Secondly, we must accept the fact that group life and large institutions are here to stay: it is folly to yearn for the
Days of the
For the simpler days of the past: the horse and buggy and the
spinning wheel. It is a deceptive illusion that the past was a time
of little confusion. The past did not have that simple unity we
nostalgically attribute to it. The fact is that virtually every
generation gave birth to rebellious thinkers, writers, clerics,
artists, who refused to accept the stultification of the human spirit.

Thirdly, we must realize that the personality of the individual
is not developed in total isolation, that the highest in man is realized
in choosing among institutions that serve his purposes. But always
institutions keep in mind that these institutions are not democracy's purpose. The
purpose of democracy is still to make men, and men are formed in virtue
of their struggles to find the good.

How does one develop individuality - the full power of one's self?

At the outset, we must agree on the value of individualism: that man is
an end in himself, and that the unity of the self, man's spiritual
success is the primary goal in life. Each life is a moment of eternity,
not a mere echo.

To realize the highest self, one must be self-devoted, not self-seeking. This means that despite the instinct for gregariousness, and
group living, the individual must not become over organized, overgrouped,
a slave to social activity. One must make wise choices about the groups
he belongs to and which serve his purposes. One must allow time for
developing talents, for encouraging the capacity for thought.

Too many of us are joiners, we have too many meetings, and
too little time for ourselves. Many of us swamp our talents in group
life, not realizing that a sacrificed talent may poison and frustrate
our lives. Some of us are afraid of testing our talents, are unwilling
to accept the challenge to make good. And so we join one group after
ANOTHER TO ESCAPE FROM OURSELVES.

I REALIZE THAT THIS MAY SOUND INCONSISTENT: IT IS IN FACT A DIFFICULT
IDEA. BECAUSE OUR HIGHEST EXPRESSION OF THE UNIFIED SELF IS DEVELOPED
IN SERVICE OF AN IDEAL, AND OUR HIGHEST IDEALS HAVE SOCIAL MEANING.

THE RESOLUTION OF THIS APPARENT DIFFICULTY CAN BE FOUND IN IMMANUEL
KANT'S STATEMENT THAT MAN NEEDS AN ALLOY OF INDIVIDUALISM AND SOCIALITY.
ALSO MAN NEEDS A DEGREE OF NECESSARY UNSOCIABleness WHICH IS NECESSARY TO
DEVELOP HIS TALENTS. HE MUST LEARN TO SAY 'NO' TO DEMANDS WHICH DO NOT
SERVE HIS HIGHEST NATURE.

THE SPRING OF GREATNESS IN ALL CREATIVE ACTIVITY IS THE CONTEMPLATIVE
SPIRIT. THIS IS TRUE OF LIFE AS OF ART. WHAT OUR NATION NEEDS MOST TODAY
ARE NEW HEROES: NOT FOOTBALL HEROES, BUT HEROES OF THE SPIRIT AND THE
INTELLECT. WE NEED MODELS OF QUIET AND RESERVE. WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE
MEN TO RETIRE AS MUCH AS TO ACT.

IT IS SIGNIFICANT TO NOTE HOW MOSES RECEIVED THE TORAH AND THE
TEN COMMANDMENTS. HE WENT UP TO MOUNT SINAI AND RETIRED FOR EXACTLY FORTY
DAYS AND NIGHTS. THE TORAH WAS NOT REVEALED TO HIM IN THE MIDST OF A
MEETING OF THE NOBLE SOCIETY OF THE GOLDEN CALF.

THE BEST PLACE TO BEGIN TO LEARN INDIVIDUALITY, TO REALIZE
ONE'S POWER OF SELF, IS RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE, AT HOME. A HUSBAND AND WIFE
CAN ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER TO BEGIN REGULAR STUDY, AT HOME. TO READ THOSE
ENRICHING BOOKS THEY HAVE PUT ASIDE AND POSTPONED FOR SO LONG. A MOTHER
AND FATHER CAN GENERATE THIS SPIRIT WHICH NURTURES INDIVIDUALITY BY
UNDERSTANDING THEIR CHILD FULLY. CERTAINLY A NORMAL CHILD NEEDS PLAY
AS
AND RECREATION THE MUCH AS HE REQUIRES NOURISHMENT, BUT IF YOUR CHILD
INCLINES TO BEING QUIET AND STUDIOUS, THINK HIM NOT ABNORMAL, AND FRET
NOT OVER SUCH LABELS AS "HE IS ANX INTROVERT".

TO LIVE A CREATIVE, MEANINGFUL LIFE ONE SHOULD STRIVE TOWARD
CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT. THE GOAL IS SELF-DEVELOPMENT AND SPIRITUAL
SATISFACTION. THE PROCESS OF THIS DEVELOPMENT IS AS IMPORTANT AS SOME
OF ITS PRODUCTS. BY THIS I MEAN TO SAY THAT TO BE CREATIVE ONE MUST
NOT NECESSARILY BE A BEETHOVEN OR A REMBRANDT, OR AN EINSTEIN. EVEN
IF WE ARE NOT PROFESSIONALS, WE CAN BECOME SUPERIOR INDIVIDUALS BETTER
EQUIPPED TO LIVE FULLER AND MORE CONSTRUCTIVE LIVES IF WE LEARN TO
RESPECT OUR OWN TALENTS AND THE TALENTS OF OTHERS.

OUR FIRST DUTY, THEREFORE, IS TO KNOW OURSELVES. TO DEVELOP THESE
OUR HIGHEST POWERS—THIS IS THE END OF LIVING. AND TO ACHIEVE THIS END,
WE MUST ASK OURSELVES: WHAT DO WANT TO MAKE OF OUR LIVES? AND THEN: WHAT
RESOURCES, WHAT TALENTS, CAPACITIES HAVE WE AND WHAT IS THERE IN
OUR ENVIRONMENT TO HELP US ACCOMPLISH THIS AIM? AND FINALLY, WHAT CHOICES
DO WE MAKE AND WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THESE CHOICES WHICH WILL HELP
IN THIS DEVELOPMENT?

THIS ACT, THE DISCOVERY OF THE SELF, IS TO MY MIND, THE AT THE
CORE OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE.

WE MUST CONFESS TO OURSELVES THAT NO SOCIETY WAS EVER ESTABLISHED
IN WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL WAS TRAINED TO THINK. PERHAPS THE SHOCK OF THE
INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILE AND SPUTNIK MAY BE BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE
CHALLENGING US TO HASTEN THE PROCESS WHICH WE HAVE SO LONG RESISTED: THE
DEVELOPING OF SUPERIOR INDIVIDUALS, ESTEEMING THOSE WHO HAVE ACHIEVED
INTELLECTUAL, SPIRITUAL SUCCESS.

WE ARE PERHAPS NOW, BELATEDLY AND UNDER UNHAPPY PRESSURES, JUST
BEGINNING TO GLIMPSE THE BIBLICAL AND RABBINIC EMPHASIS ON THE ROLE OF
THE INDIVIDUAL AND HIS POWER FOR GOOD IN THE WORLD. THE MIDRASH
EPITOMIZED THIS IN THE INSTRUCTION THAT IN HEAVEN, THE PARENTS
ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB DO NOT RECITE PRAYERS SIMULTANEOUSLY. WERE THEY
TO DO SO, THE IMPACT OF THEIR PERSONALITIES WOULD CREATE A SPIRITUAL
EXPLOSION AND WOULD BRING ON THE MESSIAH BEFORE HIS TIME.

OUR TIME WITH ITS APOCALYPTIC FEARS AND STRAINS IS IN NEED
OF SUCH POWERFUL PERSONALITIES WHO IN THE FULLNESS OF THEIR SPIRITUAL
POWERS WILL RE-CREATE THIS WORLD IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DIVINE DESIGN.
AND WHENCE COMETH THOSE INDIVIDUALS? FROM OUT THERE, FROM AMONG YOU.