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"The Chosen People in 1943." 23 April 1943.

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The
" CHOSEN PEOPLE IN 1943 "

A sermon delivered April 23, 1943, Temple Israel, St. Louis, Missouri
(Originally given, 1942, Greenwich, Conn. Adapted 1943)

It might have been old red wine dripping on the worn wooden floors of that building in Roumania. But it wasn't wine. It was ~~fluid~~ ^{fluid} of older vintage. It might have been old red wine but it was Jewish blood.

A radio blasted...The Germans are coming. A crowd shouted...The leader is coming, And a Jewish quarter screamed...the mob is going...and a Nazi horde slit the throats of thousands of Jews and became drunk on a red fluid that might have been wine, but was Jewish blood.

A leaky wooden boat laden with broken men, ravaged woman, and hunger-puffed children was in the middle of the Danube. The nations at either shore would grant the boat no leave to land. After all these were not human beings, whispering their great wallings through parched throats. These were animals of a lower specie...these were Jews. Let Jews die!

But parched throats cried out: We thought we were chosen, yet all reject us. The poets words came to mind: Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs... fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons. ...If you prick us, do we not bleed? ...if you poison us do we not die.....

How is the chosenness of the Jewish people expressed in Roumania. How is the chosenness shown in a leaky boat...Tantulus-like in the midst of unfriendly waters.

The world is two armed camps. The world is an angry baby kicking its feet against its hands, beating its hands against its feet. Row on row, like the crosses in Flanders, United Nations face Fascist Nations. Echoes of Wilson blend with the stirring speeches of Roosevelt and the free nations of the world engage in a great, global war.

Freedom loving peoples of the Americas, of the Soviet Republics and of the British Commonwealth of China wage war today in order that tomorrow men may walk uprightly and children may sing. And aligned against them is the coalition of Hell, striving to march forward crushingly and seize or destroy all that is in the path of conquest.

This is more than a second world war that we are fighting. It is a civil war of

the world. And there can be no compromise. It is a war fought because the world can not exist, must not exist - half slave and half-free.

In this war, however, the issues are not as neatly drawn as the battle lines. Nor all that the United Nations do is white. Not all that the Fascist Nations do is black. We face the risk that our troops will out-run our ideals. We must remember, we united nations, not only to oppose Fascism but also to strengthen the democracies of life. For all is not black on one side...and all is not white on the other. There are large patches of grey on the ethical war maps.

The true democrat, the enlightened democrat, joins now in the plea for the century of the common man..and fights to the death opposing the Century of the common mind. The true democrat opposes evil wherever it is found, be it in conquered Europe or in India.

The world is at war. Nations take sides. People take arms. Where do we find the Jewish people? In which camp is the chosen Israel? But first where was the individual Jew before the crisis?

I see a few rich Jews in ante-bellum Germany giving Hitler money. And I see many others that hate him. I see a few powerful American Jews saying Hitler is all right... but he shouldn't pick on the Jew, And I see many others that hate him. I look ~~back~~ back in time and find Jews too, were among those that rocked the cradle of Fascism. I look back in time and find Jews too, were among those that first saw the danger and sounded the unheeded clarion to the free nations. I look back a decade and see Jews occupy high ranks in Fascist Italy and see others that thought it was only an incident in Germany, soon to be forgotten, after all, the decent Germans would stop him.

Although the Jewish people has been committed throughout history to the democratic way, when I look back into the decade of darkness, I can still discern individual Jews in every camp.

Ten years ago though our people as a whole is pledged to right living - some Jews were haters and hated, hated and haters...but where are the individuals Jews today?

An order: No Jew may join the armies of the Reich. An order: All Jews must resign from the Fascist. An order: German Jews may not hold government jobs. And

order: Refugee Jewish professors in Japan are to leave at once. Look to your newspaper and see where the Jew is. The Fascist nations have rejected him, placed him in portless ships and sealed cattle-cars. The Jew is made a second class citizen in Hatedom, a third-class citizen in Evildom, the Jew becomes stateless in the lands of tyranny. And even our domestic Fascists think to libel a democrat by labeling him a Jew.

When we look at the world today, we must conclude that nearly every Jew is found on the side of righteousness, always with the enemy of the evil nations. Sometimes against his own will, but the Jew is aligned with decency and goodness. He must be, for the Fascist powers reject even help—from the Jew. And what is more, the Jewish community has a historic stand on righteousness.

All of this is no compliment - it is only fact! Only the nations resisting aggression accept Jewish aid. The Jew looks about himself in this world at war and asks: "Wherein do we differ from other people? What makes us chosen?"

And this is the answer: The Jew looks about himself and sees that as a community he is on the side of the right - and what is more important, he sees that at last the issue is not: On who's side is the Jew? No, today's conflict is ~~this~~ ^{different} - because now the free nations are on the Jewish side.

When the Jewish group suffered alone there was little hope that the nations would aid in solving the Jewish problem. A problem that is only one aspect of the greater minority problem and the problem of justice in a free world. Now that all mankind is at war, the Jew may feel that when the world problem is dealt with, the Jewish problem too will be met with.

I am reminded of a lovely legend which ~~is~~ ^{well} illustrates this:

The cold wind and the snow it carried with it beat against the face of the traveler as he treads the narrow path over the icy mountain. He is ~~is~~ tired. He is exhausted. His strength is going fast. He struggles to keep his eyes open knowing that if he would close them, he would fall asleep, and stumble in the snow, and freeze to death.

Just as he is about through and his eyelids are closing with the weight of crusted snow, he sees the body of another man fallen before him upon the ice. He forces himself to move and goes over to the fallen one and sees that in the body there is still some life. From somewhere he summons energy and he begins rubbing the man in order to restore his circulation and save him.

He works feverishly and as he successfully saves the life of the half-frozen stranger, he brings back circulation to his own wearying body and both of ~~his~~ them survived the storm.

The storm of Fascist fury was sudden and caught many of us unaware. Struggling democracies narrowly escaped death on the precipitous path only the urge for self-preservation and the desire to save a fellow in trouble kept them going. Kept them going till now it becomes possible in some measure to see the end of the storm.

The Jew looks about himself and is most hopeful. Perhaps when the nations meet after ~~the~~ ^{this} war, they will hear the Jewish plea, the plea of all ~~minorities~~ ^{minorities}, a plea of ~~righteousness~~ ^{righteousness}.

Again we may ask: How can it be said that Jews are a chosen people in 1945 — and now we can better reply.

Jewish chosenness today is expressed in the fact that individual Jews have no choice. By his will, or against his will, each Jew is on the side of goodness and bolstering his communities age-old stand.

And today as individual men and as a group in society, we are not alone.

We grieve at memories of Roumanian butchery, Nazi paganism and the floating hell on the Danube.

We grieve at the loss of Jewish life; but we are become a people passed through the flames, a nation ~~purified~~ ^{purified}.

Today no man can question how the chosenness of the Jew is shown — for a Divine destiny has set the Jew up as a barometer of justice and a leader of righteousness.

Every Jew can recall with pride that he is the torchbearer of light to the

~~the~~ nations. Where two Jews meet --they can know that they are the conquerors of Titus, the outliners of Torquemada, and the eventual victor over Hitler.

As a ~~chosen~~ community we have stood since our beginning for certain values. But never before have all our individuals been so united in the furtherance of them.

We have stood these many years for the idea of One God, for Peace among the nations, for Love of all mankind made in God's image. And the treatment of us is a touchstone of a land's chivalry -- where we are free the newer ~~the~~ values flourish -- Political Liberty, Religious Liberty, and Economic Liberty.

Where things are unfavorable for us, new and old values alike perish.

The world needs us, and we cannot fail. We Jew, fight the battle of History against the tide of history.

It is not enough for us as individuals or as a social unit that we are on the side of the good. We must make of all our potential strength, active ~~the~~ strivings that Jew and Gentile, white and black, rich and poor may be given an opportunity to reap the social and spiritual security of a free way of life.

Some Jews are born with an understanding of their chosenness.

Some Jews acquire an understanding of their chosenness.

And other Jews have chosenness thrust upon them.

Whatever the source of Jewish greatness, all Jews today must face the future with the will of those chosen for a sublime mission.

AMEN