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"Until Fear Be No More." Rosh Hashanah eve sermon.  
September 1953.

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Rosh Hashonah Eve  
1953-54

"UNTIL FEAR BE NO MORE"

News Item: There was a man who rode on a boat between two ports hundreds of times. He could not disembark at either end because of some difficulty with his identification papers. So he rode back and forth, back and forth, but didn't get anywhere.

News Item: There was a man who built a machine consisting of hundreds of moving wheels, shafts, cams and gears. It was a wonderful machine and operated flawlessly, except that as it went up and down, up and down, it didn't do anything.

P. S. He built it that way on purpose, as a satire on the over-mechanization of our age.

A boat that went back and forth and didn't get anywhere .

A machine that went up and down and didn't do anything .

These are symbols of our age.

These are the texts of this sermon.



~~"UNTIL FEAR BE NO MORE"~~

The world flourishes as never before. Science unlocks the mysteries of the physical universe at a pace which leaves us gasping. Vistas of leisure open for us and even the worker who sweats for his bread by tending the machines of the giant industries, finds his labor being constantly eased by the miracles of invention. The secret of the sun itself, raw energy and power, has already been mastered. *Man now reaches toward flight into outer space - and will probably achieve it.*

With scientific advance has come social reform which has unchained many from the previous fates of malnutrition, bad housing, disease and poverty.

5 Education spreads its benefits and psychology enables man to understand himself more thoroughly. We can now probe motivations, causes and effect, patterns of behavior, habits and conduct.

Yes -- we know much more about man and his world-- the past and the present -- the environment outside and the nervous system inside, than we ever knew before. And there

appears to be almost no limit to the secrets we can unlock.

But man has never been unhappier than he is today.

With all the growth of science and social reform -- with all the advance of education and psychology -- modern man is worse off than was his ancient ancestor millenia ago. For modern man has reached a cross road in his evolutionary development-- and he stands in fear of the future.. His God has died, and he has no faith.

Never in his entire history has man been without God.

Even when he stood dripping wet and naked before a totem pole or a Druid stone-- or even before that, when he bowed before fire -- or even before that, when he fled before the advancing mastodon with a sacred amulet clasped in hand-- man was always in relation to God, some god or gods. He

*and he believed in something beyond himself,*  
believed in himself, with which he was linked. It matters

not whether we call <sup>*this*</sup> it animism, totemism, primitivism,

fetishism. It matters not whether we deem it superstitious or

fear-ridden. <sup>*Early*</sup> Man was not rootless in an alien universe --

but sought with varied symbolism to find his place in relation



to the totality of life, animate and inanimate.

In later ages, the Jews came along and developed the finest concept of God ever imagined by the human race. They discovered that God was universal, the Creator of all, the author of a certain way of life--and they called Him Rock and Redeemer, for He was a sure firm anchor.

Today all this is changed, God seems to be dead, and the world is in anguish. Man is tortured by fear and anxiety, in the midst of all his sophistication and newly-<sup>found</sup>~~formed~~ discoveries. Man is alone--rootless--moody--bored-- riddled with fears--no foundations to his life--apparently no purpose in living, other than to survive.

Man is afraid of himself and rushes to hide in the anonymity of the mass, so that he will not be called upon to display any individual heroism<sup>or belief</sup>. Man is afraid of his neighbor--terribly suspicious of the very mass in which he seeks to bury himself--and so he seals himself off with a segment of the mass he considers to be friendly, thus denying

brotherhood and fraternity, <sup>with all,</sup> Man is afraid to think-- and accepts the nostrums and platitudes of vulgarity, demagoguery, pap which make up his daily fare of entertainment and politics. Man is afraid to risk-- and perforce barter freedom for security. Let no one throw a stone at Esau--everyone today does the same. We have sold God for a mess of television.

W. H. Auden defines our century in the title of his great eclogue "The Age of Anxiety". A woman and three men sit in a bar on 3rd Ave. in New York during the late war, discussing the futility of the ~~of~~ stages of life, the incredible blunders, the stupidity, the torpor of the spirit. This is their conclusion:

"Sob, heavy world,

Sob, as you spin

Mantled in mist, remote from the happy;

The washerwomen have wailed all night

The disconsolate clocks are crying together,

And the bells toll & toll."

T. S. Eliot is even sharper in his analysis of our time. He calls this not the age of anxiety, but the age of "Hollow Men."



We are the hollow men  
 We are the stuffed men  
 Leaning together  
 Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!  
 Our dried voices, when  
 We whisper together  
 Are quiet and meaningless  
 As wind in dry grass  
 Or rats' feet over broken glass  
 In our dry cellar.  
 Shape without form, shade without colour,  
 Paralysed force, gesture without motion;  
 Those who have crossed  
 With direct eyes, to death's other Kingdom  
 Remember us -- if at all--not as lost  
 Violent souls, but only  
 As the hollow men  
 The stuffed men.

This is the way the world ends  
 This is the way the world ends  
 This is the way the world ends  
 Not with a bang but a whimper.

And so, it is--The Age of Anxiety, The Age of ~~h~~ollow

~~M~~en. I think Dostoevsky was the first to see this moral  
 nihilism, this cynicism, this fatalism, this inability to

grapple with life, this fascination with the death-instinct which holds modern man in thrall. In "The Brothers Karamazov" there is a chapter called "The Story of The Grand Inquisitor." A cardinal of the church, the Grand Inquisitor is an old man, 90, dry and withered, who burns heretics without joy or passion, without hate or fanaticism, almost indifferently. Into the crowd at an auto-da-fe appears a figure whom the people instinctively recognize to be Christ. They surround him in a surging multitude, seeking his blessing, his cure, his inspiration. The Grand Inquisitor senses danger in the presence of this rare spirit, capable of unleashing the finer nature, and orders him arrested.

In the dead of night, the Grand Inquisitor visits the dungeon, and informs the prisoner that he will be executed on the morrow, and then he launches into a remarkable monologue justifying this decision. He accuses Christ of being bad for the people, raising their hopes, teaching them to elevate their eyes toward universal aspirations. He admits that man does need ideals and spiritual values,



but feels that <sup>They</sup>~~men~~ should be denied these blessings, because "They are weak, vicious, worthless and rebellious". Thus, they must be kept enslaved, taught who their masters are, and this is done by the burning of heretics who question the authority of the church.

The appalling secret of the Grand Inquisitor, of course, is that he wears the cloth of God but does not believe in God. He can, therefore, not believe in man. He is Hitler almost a century early.

A decade after the Russian author's death, the evil genius Nietzsche said: "Dostoevsky was the only psychologist from whom I had anything to learn." Thus spake Zarathustra after meeting an old hermit who talked to him about God:

"Can it actually be possible? This old saint in his forest hath not yet heard aught of God being dead? But of course God was dead, all the gods were dead."

In another scene, the "higher men" gathered in Zarathustra's cave to prepare themselves to preach his doctrine.

He left them for a while and returned to find them offering incense to a donkey who has "created the world in his own image-- i. e. as stupid as possible." Then Zarathustra pronounced the name of the new God--Superman.

Here then is the high disdain for man. The Grand Inquisitor believed him worthy only of enslavement--and Nietzsche judged him a donkey, worthy only of being ruled by a Superman. The murder of God by these and others was the beginning of our present fear. From their time to this, in the past 100 years and less, man has allowed himself to be stripped down to a number, a cog, an unthinking creature to be manipulated, fed a little better, perhaps, let live a little longer, but without zest, initiative or hope-- all of which stem from God and make man divine. Today man is not divine--only bereft and foolish.

Except in Judaism. Our God lives and we will never kill him.. Our God lives and every Jew who believes in Him need never be afflicted by despair or a sense of desertion in an alien world. The Jewish God is the reflection of the



Jewish people, of its soul and destiny. That soul and that destiny may be summed up in Slonimsky's term of "tragic Heroism." So long as this sense of destiny exists, the God will exist--for He is the agent <sup>who</sup> ~~which~~ assigned the destiny and He will be the Judge at the farthest end of time to determine whether the role has been played to its full.

Judaism's heroism emerges from the manner in which it pits itself against the world of matter and seeks to transmute it, illuminate it with ethics, infuse it with morality, transcend its <sup>brutality</sup> ~~mundaneness~~ with holiness. Judaism's tragedy is, that it is inevitably shattered in the process of performing its heroic destiny.

Within the vastness of this world-task, within the hugeness of this messiahship, every Jew is called to the colors, every Jew has a place, a rank, a function. No one need be rootless, no one need be bored, no one need feel ennui. What a challenge---what a people to accept such a function as the actual shaping of history--what a God to touch this people with such greatness!

*your role is to*

We taught the world its best--and ~~shall~~ continue to teach. *There are four things we taught which are of supreme importance.* We taught the value of life--when life was cheap in human society. *ב"ה אלהים* --choose life, not death-- set the good before you, not the evil. "Life and life more abundant" is the New Testament paraphrase of this doctrine of Deuteronomy. This is an affirmation of the positive, the optimistic, the lusty. This is no Augustine, denying sex, or Assisi, embracing poverty. This is a frank espousal of all the sap and vigor of life. This is the Jew saying on Rosh Hashanah *ז' ה' א' ו' ח' ט' י' י"א י"ב י"ג י"ד י"ה י"ו י"ז י"ח י"ט* --Remember us unto life, O King who delightest in life. God delights in life and man is permitted to enjoy it.

*Second,* We taught the value not only of life but of man *himself* -- propounding that greatest of all maxims for human conduct-- *אהב את רעך כמוך* --"love your neighbor as yourself." In expounding this, we repudiated for all time forms of government which would enslave, forms of economics which would impoverish, forms of social life which would discriminate.



The entire morality of western civilization comes from this revolutionary sentence.

*Amid* We taught the value of law and justice--setting our hall-mark on Roman law and English law and Napoleonic law.

*שָׁלוֹם לְכָל הָעָם* -"Justice, justice, shalt Thou pursue."--  
 was the passionate slogan under which the flaming prophets chastised Kings and commoners alike. Care for the orphan--relieve the oppressed--feed the hungry--clothe the naked. The whole vast concept of human rights as being god-given and therefore to be protected, derived from the ancient tiny Israel. Every black and yellow colonial freed because of the twinge of conscience of a western Christian power, owes his liberation to the Hebraic source of social justice--whether he know it or not, whether the Christian inheritor of Judaism know it or not.

And lastly we taught the value of time-- the belief that time moves in the same direction as history. There are no quick solutions-- no easy panaceas. There is only the slow and steady march toward *אֵת הַסֵּוֹף* --"the end of days"--

--the time when history will have fulfilled itself and creation will be complete. It takes patience, for the Messiah seems to <sup>be</sup> slow in coming, but at least there is purposeful work to be done in the interim. No man will be there, at the end of time, but neither is any man allowed to desist from helping prepare the way. The entire human race is thus the midwife assisting at the birth of the Messiah, who represents man's final achievement and fulfillment.

Yes--we taught the world many things--the value of life, of man, of law, of time--and we were able to teach all this because we learned it from our God.

As we taught, we were reviled, oppressed, crushed. They spit at us and raped us and slew us. Isaiah warned us to expect this--even coined a phrase to explain it-- the famous 53rd chapter describing the suffering servant of the Lord. And we shall undoubtedly continue to suffer so long as we choose this role. Our destiny is high and tragic. We are not just a people, but a god-bearing people, with a distinctive soul and mission. We have the task of keeping



God alive in the world--and to do this, we must take on all experience and all suffering. There is no other way.

A chaplain friend, who served in the Far East, once told me something about Chinese wisdom. Chinese writing takes the form of word pictures, symbolically drawn. For instance, the word for "happiness" is a symbol of one woman under one roof. "Unhappiness" is a word picture of two women under one roof. "Crisis" is a combination of two word-forms, one signifying disaster and the other opportunity. This shows a very deep insight-- for crisis is not just a time of disaster--it is also a time of opportunity. The real crisis of our age is that we see disaster and are appalled by it--but we fail to see opportunity because we are without faith to believe in the future.

Each Rosh Hashanah is a time for opportunity. Tradition says that the world was created on Rosh Hashonah--this is the birthday of the world. And at each new year--each birthday--the world can be created again, improved, repaired, reborn.

What a terrific idea.!! Having a second chance to do it better.

Rabbi Abbahu said--"The Holy one went on creating worlds and destroying them until He created this one, and then declared "This one pleases Me!"

Here is the powerful life-idealism of the Jewish religion. We keep on creating worlds until we fashion one that pleases us. We brook no despair--reject the panic and the fear--ignore the dark pessimism of this age of anxiety-- and above all, live not as hollow men of straw without purpose or plan-- but live as Jews whose proud and terrible destiny it is to carry God on their shoulders until the end of time-- until the golden age--until the heights have been scaled--until fear shall be no more.



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Second, we taught the value not only of life but of man--himself-- propounding that greatest of all maxims for human conduct-- --"love your neighbor as yourself." In expounding this, we repudiated for all time

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Third, we taught the value of law and justice--setting our hall-mark on Roman law and English law and Napoleonic law.

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