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Series A: Writings and Addresses. 1947-1991

Box 1, Folder 1, "The Atomic Bomb Foreshadowed: 1700 Years Ago", 1947.



THE ATOMIC BOMB FORESHADOWED 1700 YEARS AGO...

by Marc H. Tanenbaum

When all the bells of Hiroshima last Wednesday morning tolled mournfully a one-minute reminder that just two years ago an atomic bomb blasted to death ~~more than~~ 92,000 human beings and reduced to ~~shattered~~ mangled wreckage more than half of this city's buildings, a portly, quiet scholar sat in his ~~Manhattan~~ in mid-Manhattan room and nodded ~~nodding~~ ruefully.

Dr. Michael Higger, a noted authority on the Talmud who was now completing his twenty-fifth book on the traditional Jewish code of law, softly said: " This is the most disastrous minute in the history of man. The Talmud forewarned us of this destructive force over 1700 years ago. We have ~~repeatedly~~ rebuked the warning, and the bells toll because of it..."

In the nineteenth century, Jules Verne, French writer of scientific fiction, startled his contemporaries with prognostications of great technological triumphs of the twentieth century. He virtually foresaw the inventions of the dirigible balloon, the aeroplane, the submarine, and television.

But the Talmud's revelations, Dr. Higger pointed out, was even more amazing. In the second century CE, a Talmudic sage foreshadowed the ~~most~~ most destructive weapon of modern science: the atomic bomb.

A passage in the Babylonian Talmud (Bekorot 57 B) reads:

"R. Ishmael ben Satriel of Arkath Lebanah testified before Rabbi (R. Jehudah Ha-Nasi, about 200 CE): 'In our country...~~there~~ a Bar Yokni (a fabulous bird) once dropped an egg, destroying 60 cities and shattering 300 cedar trees...'. "

