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SUNDAY RADIO CHAPEL - WOR  
SUN. NOV. 17, 1957

# THE POWER OF YOU

by Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Executive Director  
of The Synagogue Council of America

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## HOW WAS THE WORLD CREATED?

TWO SAGES OF THE TALMUD CONSIDERED THIS QUESTION, AND ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ <sup>APPEARED</sup> TO DISAGREE. THE WORLD WAS CREATED, "MIN HATZIDADAIM," LITERALLY, "FROM THE SIDES," TOWARD THE CENTER, SAID ONE. THE OTHER CLAIMED, "ME'EMZIASO," THE WORLD WAS CREATED FROM THE CENTER OUTWARD.

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

~~XXXXXX~~  
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 ~~THE~~ SUPERIOR MEN AND WOMEN, THEY ARE AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD AND ARE ITS ~~SOLUTION~~. <sup>SAVATION</sup>.

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

BUT THIS IS A GOAL, AND A GOAL THAT OUR CIVILIZATION AND OUR NATION <sup>HAVE</sup> ~~HAS~~ 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 ~~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" <sup>6</sup> WE ~~"BUY THEIR BRAINS"~~.

IN AN EXCELLENT STUDY OF AMERICAN LIFE ~~PUBLISHED BY~~ BY 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, ~~AND ACCEPT OF OUR BEHAVIOR~~, SEEK OUR ENTERTAINMENT, IN A MONOTONOUS CONFORMITY. INDUSTRIES ~~THEY~~ WANT NOT ONLY YOUNG IVY-LEAGUE EXECUTIVES ~~XXXXXX~~ TO BE TRAINED AS COMPANY MEN, BUT AS ONE 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, ~~AND~~ WHOSE GOD IS MATERIAL SUCCESS, and WHOSE RITUAL IS SELF-INDULGENCE. IT IS LITTLE WONDER THAT WE STAND ~~IN SPIRITUAL CONFUSION~~ IN SPIRITUAL CONFUSION BEFORE THE ORBITING SPUTNIK. <sup>50</sup> AS ONE CARTOONIST EPITOMIZED OUR DILEMMA: "THEY HAVE THEIR SPUTNIK, BUT WE HAVE OUR EDESEL."

HOW DOES ONE REACT TO THIS AGE OF GREAT COLLECTIVES? HOW DOES ONE ~~SEE~~ 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 ~~IS~~ 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 ~~WAGG~~ AND THE  
 SPINNING WHEEL. IT IS A DECEPTIVE ILLUSION THAT THE PAST WAS ~~XX~~ A TIME  
 OF LITTLE CONFUSION. THE PAST DID NOT HAVE THAT ~~DE~~ SIMPLE UNITY WE  
~~XXXX~~ NOSTALGICALLY ATTRIBUTE TO IT. THE FACT IS THAT VIRTUALLY EVERY  
 GENERATION GAVE BIRTH TO REBELLIOUS THINKERS, WRITERS, ~~XXXXXX~~ CLERGYMEN,  
 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  
 WE KEEP IN MIND THAT THESE ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ 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 MANY 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 ~~UNSOCIALITY~~ 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 ~~DAY~~ FORTY DAYS AND NIGHTS. THE TORAH WAS NOT REVEALED TO HIM IN THE MIDST OF A MEETING OF THE NOBLE SOCIETY OF THE GODDEN 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 AND RECREATION ~~AND~~ AS 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 OUR SELVES. TO DEVELOP ~~THEX~~ 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 ~~XM~~ WHAT IS THERE IN OUR ENVIRONMENT TO HELP US ACCOMPLISH THIS AIM? AND FINALLY, WHAT CHOICES DO WE MAKE AND WHAT ARE THE C ONSEQUENCES 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 ~~XX~~ AND HIS POWER FOR GOOD IN THE WORLD. ~~XX~~ THE MIDRASH EPITOMIZED THIS IN THE INSTRUCTION THAT IN HEAVEN, THE PARRIARCHS, ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB <sup>DO</sup> NOT RECITE PRAYERS SIMULTANEOUSLY. WERE THEY <sup>HAVE</sup> TO DO SO, <sup>the midrash tells us</sup> THE IMPACT OF THEIR PERSONALITIES WOULD <sup>HAVE</sup> CREATE <sup>9/</sup> A SPIRITUAL EXPLOSION AND WOULD <sup>HAVE</sup> 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

TANENBAUM

/6

POWERS WILL RE-CREATE THIS WORLD IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DIVINE DESIGN.  
AND WHENCE COMETH THOSE INDIVIDUALS? FROM OUT THERE, FROM AMONG YOU.

