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MS-630: Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler Digital Collection, 1961-1996.
Series C: Speeches and Eulogies, 1967-1996.

Box
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Folder
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Speeches, 1953-1979, undated.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
American Jewish Archives website.

More jobs coming -

Congregations -

Callbacks?

Chairman of
Search Committee

Baton Rouge - One person; will
go for an interview -

Let's do more data.

Maria -

Maybe

Table to
Arrive -
Tuesday
PM

Greenwich

E-mail Arrive

Tuesday

More will
happen
afterwards

B Shuman (412-421-5084)

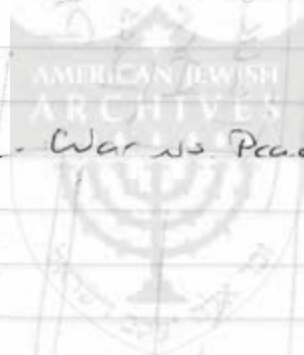
1946
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Topics

- ① Arabs
- ② State of Israel
- ③ Israeli's dilemma - War vs Peace
- ④ Jewish Law
- ⑤ God
- ⑥ Commandments
- ⑦ Death
- ⑧ War
- ⑨ Job Bible
- ⑩ Community
- ⑪ Lessons for life
- ⑫ Children

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Self Respect (Vajishlach)

The narrative portions of the Bible - the Story of Adam and Eve, of Noah, the Patriarchs, of Kings and Prophets - have always been a favorite of mine, indeed they have been the favorite of a great many people, old and young, Jew and non-jew in every land and in every age. Much of this popularity can undoubtedly be traced to the fact that the Biblical characters are very much alive and real. Unlike the protagonists of other folklores, whose princes and princesses are portrayed as paragons of virtue, pure and unblemished - and hence they appear ethereal and unreal - the heroes of the Bible are drawn vividly, as they were, as men are, with their maalous and chesrounous, their virtues and their faults, with light as well as shadow.

Take the story of Jacob, third of the Patriarchs and the man who gave his surname Israel to our people. He is one of our great heroes, to be sure - he alone of all men wrestled with the ^{angel} and survived - yet the Biblical narrator does not spare him ^{one bit} ~~and~~ bluntly reveals a defective strain in his character. In our Parasha, Parshas Vajishlach we are told of Jacob's return to Canaan. He has been in exile for 20 years, yet still remebers the hatred of his brother. He wants to establish an amicable relationship, and so the moment he crosses the borders of ~~the~~ what was to be the Holy Land he sends messengers to Esau, and this is what he instructs them to say:

"Thus shall ye say to my master Esau"
"Thus sayeth Thy servant Jacob"

Note that the technique which Jacob employs to gain his brothers favour was that of servility and submission and throughout the whole course of the narrative, until he finally succeeds in shaking him loose, Jacob maintains this servile standard of mutual relationship. Esau is always the odoun, the master, and Jacob, the eved, the servant and slave. Nor was this just a figure of ^{POLITE} speech, a manner of speaking, for listen to the remainder of Jacob's initial message.

"O Esau, I have oxen and asses and flocks and men servants and maid servants, and I have sent to tell my Lord, that I may find favour in his eyes."

Jacob appeals to his brother, not on the basis of brotherhood, not on the basis of the fact that they had a common father and mother, but on the grounds of self interest. He says: I have become wealthy, I can be useful to you, it is to your interest to be kind to me.

Now, while humility is a virtue, servility is not. And it was a servility which Jacob displayed at that moment - a cringing servility, unworthy of Jacob, unworthy of the dignity of any man.

More tragic of course, is the fact that in our lives and in our times in viewing our relationship as Jews to non Jews we have so frequently and of our own volition placed ourselves in the position of slaves to masters. We cry to the non-Jew - and all you have to do is to read the apolgetics of the ADL to see the truth of this assertion - we cry to the non-Jew: We Jews have made a contribution totthis country, to the world. We have men of great wealth, of wosdom and vision. Accept us if you please, we can be of benefit to you. And does this policy of servility bear fruit. Of course it doesn't unless it be a fruit of poison.

the non Jew merely laughs, and together with Esau says to the Jacobs of our day: I don't want you, I don't want your wealth your wisdom and your vision. I want your room. By cringing, by catering, by cow-towing, we Jews gain nothing. On the contrary, we lose, ~~these~~ the respect of the Non-Jew and we lose the respect of the Jew our own respect our self respect.

And here, I think, we come upon the central problem facing Jews today - the question of their morale, their self respect. In the individual, self esteem is a desperate need. This the psychiatrist affirm ~~confirm~~ and our own experience confirms. As long as a man can keep his self respect he can endure everything, no matter how bad. Let him lose that, and he will be incapable of joy, incapable of creativity, perhaps even incapable of life itself. And what is true for an individual is true for a people and we can well paraphrase that brilliant observation of Goethe: ^{the greatest that} ~~nothing more~~ evil can befall a people is that it should come to think ill of itself.

The ultimate cause of this soul's disease, the loss of self-respect is not far to seek. Its root is the persistent persecution of the Jew; and of the many remedies suggested only one can stand the test of trial - Judaism.

It is interesting to note in this connection that as far as the psyche of the Jew is concerned, ^{that} ~~the~~ ^{type of} relatively peaceful prejudice found everywhere, even in America, is infinitely more dangerous than the wild anti-semitism of a Hitler era. The latter is like a blow over the head, it destroys ^{TO BE SURE} life, but at least we are aware of the pain and psychologically we resist and pull away. Social antisemitism on the other hand is more like a pin-prick. A bit painful, irritating at most, the danger exists that we grow accustomed to it and come to disregard it entirely. And before we know it that pin-prick, the point of friction, grows into an open festering sore.

The Jew is exposed to many such pin-pricks, to almost constant irritation. In the first instance, he can never, even under the most favorable circumstances regard himself as entirely wanted by the society of which he is a part; no matter what the theoretical legal rights, socially he is never the equal; no matter how friendly the face that greets him, he is accepted only with reservation. Nor can the Jew ever be overconfident about his position - at any time, the majority may undergo a change of heart concerning him; he never knows when that latent, quiet prejudice will erupt into violent antisemitism; it is almost like sitting under a volcano that boils and you can't quite lose your apprehensions. In addition to this, every Jew has at one time or another reason to conclude that he has been penalized for his Jewishness. If he seeks employment, if he is a student going to medical school, a instructor who want to be professor, a mother who wants to get her child onto finishing school, or a suburbanite who wants to join a golf club, always he knows that his identity places a special obstacle in his way. And then of course, there are the pin-pricks of antisemitic propaganda, ^{WHICH, THOUGH ADDRESSED TO THE NON-JEW ARE HEARD BY THE JEW} in book and newspaper, in lecture and conversation, he overhears, it is dinned into his hear that he is unclean physically and degraded morally.

Now what happens to the Jew thus pricked, thus rubbed. Sooner or latter, perhaps consciously, perhaps not, he begins to reason to himself that there must be something to all this ado, that where there is smoke, there must be fire. He won't belief the antisemite's charges about himself or about his immediate friends, his circle. But he believes it about other Jews and he begins to scrutinize them for some of the vices listed by the antisemite. And as would be the case with ^{ANY} ~~any~~ other group of human beings, he finds Jews who exhibits such faults. He holds himself aloof, from them blames them for his troubles and begins to hate them. AND SO BY A STANGE TURN, ANTI*SEMITISM

VICTIMIZES THE JEW IN A FASHION THE ANTISEMITES NEVER CONCEIVED
IT CONVERTS HIM TO ITS CAUSE THE JEW BECOMES THE ANTISEMITE. * See note
reverse side

Let no one underestimate the existence of this process and its
dire consequence. In some Jews it exists less pronounced than in
others. But all of us exhibit some symptoms of this malady. Let us
be honest with ourselves, how often have heard others say, how often
have you yourself said or thought: 'The Jews are so aggressive;
the Jews - meaning the other Jews of course, are so cliquish, so
clannish. Too many Jews are radical. We Jews are our worst enemies.
and the like.' Lman Hashem, for heaven's sake, when are we going to learn
that by thinking and talking like this we play into the hands of the
very people who seek our destruction. When are we going to learn, that
by thinking and talking like this we speed our own destruction ^{beginning w} through/
the disintegration of our minds, of self respect, and ending with
the annihilation of our bodies, the Jewish people.

Well, how can we prevent this soul's disease? and its dire
consequences. Assimilation is certainly no answer - by this method
we achieve through a short cut just what we are trying to avoid, the
loss of our people and the loss of self-respect. Re-enforcing our
individual self-esteem through achievement in fields unrelated to
Judaism also offers no solution. Just as a person accused of
lying cannot affirm is innocence not by proclaiming he is a great
metaphysician but only by affirming his honesty, so a Jew obsessed
with a sense of inferiority as a Jew, cannot hope to neutralize his
difficulty by recounting to himself his attainments in other fields.
It is as a Jew that he questions his worth, and it is as a Jew and
Jew alone, that his conviction of his worth can be restored.

The Mountaineer Hotel

WADE H. LOWRY, JR., MANAGER

Williamson, W. Va.

Not many years ago Prof. Hoyerer, eminent founder
of the psychology of peoples & claimed: Thank God that
I am not a Christian - ~~at least I am not exposed to~~
~~indulging in~~ the most detestable of all vices - Anti-Semitism.
Little did Prof. Hoyerer know his people. They too are
exposed & have become subject to this ~~to~~ malady.

It exists among us, there can be little doubt.
~~There~~ Even if his soul's desire is less pronounced in ~~other~~
some than it is in others among us. On the one hand
we have our ~~Orthodox~~ ~~Orthodox~~ ~~Orthodox~~

Here then is the answer to our problem. The struggle of the Jew to maintain his self respect can only be waged on the level of Judaism. The more we know about Judaism, the more we learn to love the tradition and culture which made us; the more we become involved in and stimulated by Jewish life, the more we are imbued with the conviction of the worthiness of our faith of the meaningfulness of the whole Jewish enterprise, the greater will be our ability to withstand adverse psychic influence. Some months ago I told you that ~~the health of our bodies depends on Judaism~~ that we can gain the respect of the non-Jewish community through increased devotion to the faith of our fathers. The same holds true for our self respect. For the health of our souls as well as our bodies we need not less Judaism, but more and more of it.

We pray then this day for God's gift of knowledge. May we learn to know Judaism ^{as JEWISHNESS} as honorable and meaningful ^{IN OUR LIVES} realities so that we will be able to walk forward with head held high, bowing to no one, calling no one master and fortified with ~~out~~ a sense of our own dignity ^{A SENSE OF OUR OWN} and our own worth.

AMEN

JMK

Parshas Emor

Shall we turn the other cheek?

The traditional Biblical portion, Parshas Emor, read today which commences with the 21 Chapter of the Book of Leviticus and continues to the 25th chapter contains a large variety of laws - legislation concerning the priesthood, the holidays, laws regulating the relation of a Jew to his fellow and to the stranger that dwells within his gate. There is also the law of retaliation, cited first in Exodus and repeated here:

If a man maim his neighbor; as he hath done, so shall it be done unto him, breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. as he has maimed a man, thus shall it be rendered unto him.

This verse is a favorite of the enemies of our ~~pe~~ faith and has ever been used to demonstrate the vengeful character of Judaism as opposed to the proclaimed mercy and love of Christianity. In the Book of Mathew we read:

Ye have heard that it hath been said: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever should smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

The charge that this law of retaliation is characteristic of Judaism is, needless to say, unjust. For one, this law was never applied literally by Jews. Always, so far as we are aware of it, it was interpreted to legislate monetary restitution, the payment of damages for an injury afflicted - the value of a tooth for a tooth, the worth of an eye for an eye - an interpretation which underlies the laws of damages of all modern civilized nations. Moreover, and this is most important, it is not the sole standard regulating the relationship between man and man within Jewish ethic. There are laws of a different character in our Bible; and citing the law of retaliation as final proof of Judaism's depravity is employing the technique of

citing out of context so repugnantly familiar to modern Television viewers. It would be unfait of us, ~~xxxxxxx~~ if we were to take an isolated statement from the New Testament and call that the essence of Christinity. For instance, in the Book of Mathew Jesus is quoted as saying: "Think not that I have come to send peace on earth. I came not to send peace, but a sword. I have come to set a man against his father, and the daughter against her mother?" These words were uttered by Jesus. He brings not peace, but a sword and comes to set the children against the parents. Of course, this is not the essence of Jesus's teaching, nor is the law of retaliation the essence of the Jewish religion. There are laws of a different character in our Bible, laws which proclaim the principle of love, the love of God for man and of man for God, and the love of man for each other. Every page of our Scripture vibrates with this thought. of love: ~~xxxxxxx~~ Just listen and remember: Veohavto es donoi eloheh Thou shalt love the Lord thy God: Veohavtem es hager...love ye the stranger: Veohavto lereacho comocho: thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Adono etc. The Lord God is gracious and compassionate, longsuffering and overflowing with lovingkindness...There is the real essence of Judaism, love, a limitless love, a love which knows no bounds, a love which aims ultimately at the complete and utter obliteration of the selfish ego.

This is not to obscure the fact that there is a real difference between the Jewish and the Christian attitude toward justice. When a wrong is done to you, turn the other cheek! This is the Christian ideal. Judaism, on the other hand, faces wrong with a demand for justice, tempered by love and devoid of all vindictiveness and vengeance.

The Christian ideal of turning the other cheek, attractive as it might seem on the surface, is not convincing, nor is it moral. For one, it is unlivable - not even the best Christians practice it. For another, it ~~increases~~ generally increases evil. The one who slaps one cheek, will slap the other, if it is turned to him; he may even be emboldened to slap the cheeks of other people and thus increase evil. Finally, if I am slapped without provocation, an injustice is committed. What is unjust is immoral, and what is immoral must ever be resisted, even if the object of injustice is myself.

Judaism's ideal is more reasonable and more moral. Basically, it is a demand for justice. The value of an eye for an eye, the value of a tooth for a tooth. This is not to be confused with the instinctive reaction of the savage or the beast who exacts and on the spot two teeth for one and two eyes for one, who returns hurt for hurt and throws in something extra for good measure. To get even, to take revenge is dangerous, for by adding that something extra, by exacting two teeth for one, we throw the scales out of balance, and thus invite countermeasures which we must respond again and thus get caught in the vicious cycle of revenge. Tzedek, Tzedek tirdouf...justice, justice shalt thou pursue. but that justice must be free from hate: Lo Sikoum velou sitour: thou shalt not bear a grudge nor take vengeance. To which must be added the dictum of the rabbis: Al todin es chavercho Judge not your fellow man until you stand in his place: Try to understand the one who offends you, and understanding him, you will be capable of mercy.

Here is the same Jewish view of morality: Justice, tempered by mercy and devoid of hatred, of vindictiveness, of vengeance.

This is the theory. Now for some applications of it, and we will make this application not to distant peoples - we will not tell others how we think they ought to live. We will apply this theory to our own lives - to test whether we live up to our ^{professed} ideals.

This evening, and with this service, we mark Israel Independence Day, the sixth anniversary of the time when the Jews of Eretz Yisrael proclaimed their freedom and, in accordance with the mandate of the United Nations, set up the provisional government of Israel. It was a bright day in the history of our people; it is a bright and glorious time in the history of ^{on every day} through two thousand years of agony prayed with every fibre of his being; Leshono Habo Bi-gerusho layim...In the coming year in Jerusalem...and whose prayer has finally been answered.

Our glory is not without its sorrow...our triumph is not without its defeats and in the words of Heinrich Heine: there is a tooth-ache in our hearts, an ache, nay unbearable pain when we remember the cost of victory, when we see independence without peace, when we foresee the dread possibility of winning a Jewish State but losing Judaism. By the measuring rod of the one principle of Jewish ethics we discussed tonight, this dread possibility cannot be denied. For in our dealings with ~~xxxx~~ the Arabs the Jews, alas, have not always adhered to the principle of justice, tempered by mercy and devoid of vengeance. We can well beat our breasts - and I use the plural pronouns we and our advisedly; kol yisroel - Yea, we can well beat our breasts and say: Chotnu, we have sinned.

Of course, this self confession of guilt does not absolve others from sin. We can well imagine the anguish of our Israeli brethren who accepted the Kibya censure with grace and pain when the UN commission refused to censure the Arabs in the bus massacre of 11 Jews. The American officer in charge of the commission said: "There is no proof that the Arabs committed the attack. This is

This is tantamount to saying that Jewish soldiers killed Jewish men women and Jewish children just to make the Arabs look bad.

Yes, this self confession of sin does not give others the right to criticise us, be they gentlemen of the cloth or members of the diplomatic corps. Where were these self-same gentlemen ten years ago when six million Jews were butchered. Where were they when the Jews of Europe were hanged poisoned and tortured to death, when they were choked, drowned and frozen to death, when they were burned alive and buried alive? Where were they when Jewish children were turned loose on an open field as living practice targets for the Wehrmacht.

They did not speak then. Let them remain silent now. *Before the throne of God*
it is always the person
+ the one who stands idly by the blessed
abstract of his neighbor who must answer
not the persecutor
We have travelled a long course, from the consideration of justice between man and man to the practical problems of Jews in the modern state of Israel. Much more can be said, of course, but an attempt, an inroad into thought has been made.

One thing is clear. We need not be ashamed of our people. And we need not be defensive about our faith. Judaism can well stand the test of other religions. It is not an untried religion. It has been tested for thirty centuries. It has sustained men in the worst of human crises. It has maintained their hope ^{in face of} ~~despite~~ adversity. ^{have} Despite centuries of persecution Jews retained their faith in mankind. They did not surrender, to bitterness, to cynicism, to dis-illusionment. They came forth from the ghettos and crematoria to plead for reform ever believing in the justice of God and in man's capacity for good, ever confident that the kingdom of God could be wrought on earth by men. All this speaks eloquently for the great capacity of Judaism to rouse the best in man, to bring out his inner strength, to walk with head erect ^{though bruised} and ever to turn upwards for higher goals and nobler visions.

Amen.

Shehechionu

Once again, by the grace of God we have reached this holiest day of the Jewish year - the Yomeem nouroeem, the days of awe

Once again the shrill sharp sounds of the shofar shake us from our complacency with their demand for a cheshbon hanefesh, for a self reckoning of the soul

Once again we are confronted with life's towering challenge where art thou man? Where are you in your world?

So many days and years of those allotted to you have passed and how far have you gotten in your world

Are you all that you might have been, all that you could have been?

How quickly the ^{year has} ~~past~~ gone by.

It seems only yesterday that we were gathered here,

a full year before us then,

~~We were happy~~ each of its months a meadow of hope

each day a lovely flower blossoming on that field.

We were happy and confident then, as we looked ahead

But the leaves fall and flowers fade. and the months glide silently by reckoning but little of our clocks and calendars with their petty markings of times and of seasons....

Our days are as a shadow that passeth ~~away~~..they are speedily gone and they fly away

Aye, the leaves fall and the flowers fade...

so many of our hopes we e frustrated...and many of our dreams ^{shattered} ~~broken~~ on the rock of reality.

This certainly was not a good year for the Jewish people,

nor for America,

nor for most of us, for that matter.

And yet the tradition enjoins us to ^{begin} ~~begin~~ our ~~prayer~~ worship on this day with ~~prayer~~

~~of thanksgiving~~. shehechionu with a prayer of thanksgiving

We thank Thee for having allowed us to reach this day.

It was first prayer which we recited in our homes after the Kiddush which distinguished this day

To begin with, let me add my good wishes to those of Rabbi Klein and the members of our congregation, to the recipients of the coveted assistant teachers certificate. We have all great reason for joy today, we are all enriched: the new teachers in the inner satisfaction which comes from the ability and opportunity to impart knowledge and to mold minds; and we of this Temple ^{who} are filled with a sense of pride and with the assurance which comes from the knowledge that there is an increase in the ranks of those who are eager and able to work for the perpetuation of our faith and its institutions. All these rewards were not easily attained. They represent much time and great effort, but both were well spent.

The time of our student teachers was well spent. Their hours of labor in study and teaching represent a 'time of value' - which is the title of my sermon and its theme: a 'time of value' as against 'wasted time' with particular reference to prayer. It is a theme suggested by that portion of our Torah portion which tells of Isaac's first meeting with Rebecca. You are all familiar with the details, how Eliezer, Abraham's friend and servant travels to the land of Abraham's fathers in order to find a bride suitable for Isaac, and how, upon returning with Rebecca, the two chance upon Isaac "meditating in the field." The rabbis of the Talmud, commenting upon this verse, interpret the word 'meditate' to mean 'prayer' and they declare that Isaac must be credited with instituting the custom of regular afternoon worship, adding the admonition that no time is of greater value than time spent in prayer.

Many of us would fain to disagree with such an estimate of prayer's worth. Certainly many of us can think of a great many activities we deem of greater value than time spent in prayer and the most common answer to a rabbi who asks his congregants why they don't attend worship services with a greater measure of regularity is somewhat as follows: "I try to come, Rabbi, but I'm so busy with other things, and, to be perfectly frank, I don't get much out of prayer, by way of inspiration, or in answer to my prayers, for that matter." Which is all just another way of saying that we regard prayer pretty much a waste of time, time which, or so we think, can be spent ~~in a much~~ elsewhere in a much more profitable, or at least a much more enjoyable manner.

2

Is prayer a waste of time? A rabbi's answer to this question, contrary to what may be expected of him, is not an immediate and unqualified "no." It is rather a conditional reply - sometimes yes and sometimes no - and that happens to be the only answer that I can give with total honesty, for the more I study of prayer and of the people who pray, the more I am convinced that sometimes prayer is really a waste of time.

Prayer is a waste of time, for instance, if we expect from it miracles which will change the orderly operation of nature. Occasionally we read in the newspapers of farmers assembling to plead for a change in weather, and much as we sympathize with their plight, such prayer can hardly be effective. Our spiritual ancestors pointed to this truth in a legend related in the Talmud...story of father with two daughter...And in another passage they rule, that a man whose wife is pregnant ought not to pray that the child be a boy or a girl, according to his preference, because that's a matter which has already been determined from the very first moment of conception; therefore prayers can't possibly change it. Our ancestors ~~understood~~ understood beyond doubt that foremost among the things a man has no right to pray for are requests which run counter to the laws of nature. Prayer cannot bring rain or stop rain, it cannot exorcise disease germs, nor can it suspend the laws of gravity. Any one who expects prayer to do that, and many of us do, is indeed wasting his time.

Prayer is a waste of time, also, if we look upon it purely as petition, as a means of acquiring for ourselves those protections or possessions which we are unable or unwilling to obtain in any other way. Prayer is not meant to be a substitute for intelligence or for work, it is no cosmic order blank on which we do the asking and then sit back waiting for God to supply the answers.

In one of the most dramatic scenes in the Book of Exodus, it is recorded that when our fathers were caught with the unfordable Red Sea in front and the pursuing Egyptian armies behind, Moses left his people for some moments of prayer for divine help. The reply which he received from God is startling, for it was nothing less than a rebuke for having prayed: וְהוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי יֵשְׁעוּ מִיְּמֵי יְהוָה Wherefore criest thou unto me: דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward. It is as though God had said:

"I have everything prepared for your action. I have done the last thing that I can do. Now it is your move. You cannot obtain by prayer what comes only as a reward of work." Such a rebuke many of our prayers deserve, for they cross over into the realm where results must be achieved, not by asking, but by working and by thinking, and hence such prayers are also a waste of time.

If this be so, if prayers which would interrupt the laws of nature and prayers through which we seek only to acquire things for ourselves are a waste of time, what kind of prayer is valid and acceptable for the modern worshipper?

In the first place, prayer is not a waste of time if we recognize that its primary purpose is to stimulate a specific kind of conduct in the person praying. Prayer is valid only if it moves us to provide a part of the answer ourselves. The preachers of old, the Baalei Midrash, commenting upon the very passage quoted a moment ago, declared that the desperate plight of Moses and our fathers was answered only when they had actually walked into the Red Sea up to their very noses - which means obviously that they had to show courage and the willingness to take action themselves before they had the right to depend upon God.

Translating that into the specific terms of our lives, it means that our prayer of thanks giving is valid only if it moves us to share more generously with others the gifts for which we are in the process of giving thanks. Our prayer for peace is acceptable only if praying for peace impels us vigorously to think and work and act for peace in our relationships. Our prayer as Jews for understanding and respect toward us is valuable only if we make it the point of departure for greater understanding and deeper respect on our part toward others. ~~In short, prayer is judged principally by the specific action and~~

~~conduct it motivates.~~
In short, prayer is judged principally by the specific action and conduct it motivates. If prayer meets this standard, if it leaves us with a realistic appreciation of the respect in which we have indeed improved ourselves, proud of the decent things we have succeeded in doing over a period of ~~years~~ a day or a week, but deeply dissatisfied and disturbed with the cheap and shabby things we have ^{done} and strongly determined not to repeat them, then, far from being a waste of time, prayer becomes the most fruitful and valuable use of time that it is possible to know.

Prayer for other people and for the totality of mankind is not a waste of time. ^{time}

Prayers which moves from the singular to the plural pronoun, from "I want" or "give me" to grant us - such prayers represent time spent in a valuable manner.

So many of our prayers are not that. It is related of the painter Raphael that he used to wear a candle in a pasteboard ~~box~~ cap, so that, while he was painting, his shadow would not fall upon his work. So many of our prayers are spoiled by our own shadow, by the predominance of the "I".

Why is prayer for others so valuable? In the first instance, of course, by praying for others we may be impelled to do for them, which is a significant function of prayer as has already been stated. But even more important, by praying for them our concept of existence shifts from an egocentric view to a more total ~~view of existence~~ *there is also more wholeness*.

And we need such a perspective. Our day by day existence allows us only a fragmentary view of life, ~~and the fragment we see is only the I, standing alone awaiting~~ and consequently our ^{personal} needs and our ^{personal} problems assume overwhelming proportions. Stand close to a painting and what do you see? Only a confusion of daubs and paints. Do you wish to see the design and the pattern, stand back from the painting and behold a miracle. For as you withdraw, the strokes begin to fit together, the individual daubs take on relationship to one another, take on meaning collectively. All unite to form a pattern and design.

In this business of living, we often lose the pattern because we stand too close. We
see only a fragment of life. By changing our prayer from the "I" to the "us", we gain
a larger perspective. When we pray for others we learn to understand them, and as we
do, we understand ourselves much better. When we feel the pain of others, our own pain
seems less severe; when we sense the need of others, our own needs appear less demanding;
when we behold the fears of others, our own fears loom less large. Prayer which can do this
is surely no waste of time, nay, upon the contrary it represents a time of value.

If you will permit me to add one intensely personal note, I learned the function of prayer in this respect by lying at the bottom of my fox hole in Italy, hugging the ground until I almost ^{was} bur~~ing~~^{ing} myself into it during a German Artillery barrage. I prayed

5

then and sometimes have wondered since if I could have survived without^t such prayer. Not because I expected a miracle, nor because I considered my own life the most important thing in the universe. But because, having commenced, like any other human being by praying for my~~self~~ own neck, I then found it possible to pray/ for many other things of greater importance. For my loved ones at home - that they might find the strength to carry on, no matter what happened to me. For my own ability, despite the most miserable of fears, to behave in a way which would make it easier and not more difficult for those who depended upon me, to behave in such a manner that they could control their own fears. For insight, through my own anxieties and worried, for the rest of my life, better to be able to understand the anxieties and fears of others. And finally, an most important, for the ultimate survival of those ideas and descendents for which we were fighting and whose survival was so much more important than my own life. Was that prayer a waste of time. Believe me, it wasn't. It kept me alive in a greater, more real sense than if it had turned aside a bullet headed in my direction.

When we ask therefore: is prayer a waste of time? I can only answer: it depends. It depends on the kind of person we are, on the sort of life we lead, and on our understanding of what prayer essentially means. If prayer is a challenge to more ethical behavior, and an opening of wider and deeper vision which encompasses others even more than than ourselves, then certainly it is not a waste of at all, but rather a time of great value.

Amen.

RESPONSE

Stars and Stones
Vajishlach - Installation as Associate

①

This is a moment of great meaning in my life, as I stand before you, in the presence of my parents and my masters, the recipient of your honor and your affection. Many moods fill my inmost being at this hour - feelings of joy and of gratitude, ~~a sense~~ ^{under} of exaltation and sacred awe. The words of Jacob in our Torah portion strike a responsive chord within me: "Kotonti Mikol Hachassodim - I am unworthy of all these mercies, unworthy of this goodness."

We are told that when Jacob returned to the land of his fathers he met two angels of God along the way, and beholding them he exclaimed: "Machane Elohim Zeh - This is ~~God's~~ ^{the} Camp of God."

When I came to this community two years ago, I too met messengers of God along the way, and humble servants of his people.

I met here men and women eager "to do and to obey," determined to plant and nurture the seeds of Israel's survival. I found here a community whose leaders were capable of rising to lofty heights of sacrifice and generosity when a real need confronted them.

I met here also a spiritual leader whose noble purpose and high achievement ~~can~~ ^{can} well serve as the ideal toward which a younger colleague should aspire.

Rabbi Klein has meant much to me; he has done much for me. He is always willing to overlook my failings, always eager to give me every opportunity for full development. Ours ~~has~~ ^{is} truly a relationship of uncommon spiritual harmony.

And having met such messengers of God along the way, I can well repeat the words of Jacob: "Machaneh Elohim Zeh - This is the Camp of God." Surely, this is a community blessed of the Lord.

I pray that God ~~may~~ help me in the great task to which I have dedicated my life. May he show us all His ways and grant us understanding so that together we may form an ever stronger band, united to do His will with a perfect heart.

2

On this, most sacred moment in ~~his~~ ^{our} life, the preacher feels that only the highest thought, a central truth of Judaism, should be proclaimed and expounded to the worshipping assembly. Our Torah portion for today can well serve such purpose for it strikes a theme that is central to Judaism, the very core of our religion - man's striving for the realization of his ideals. In the remarkable biblical legend of Jacob's wrestling we can discover the key to our name, our character and our destiny.

The details of the story are familiar to all of ^{us}, how Jacob, afraid of the morrow and his meeting with Esau, wandered alone at night, when suddenly, out of the darkness, a mysterious being emerged and wrestled with him till dawn. Jacob was wounded in the conflict, nevertheless he persevered. Just before morning his adversary implored to be released: "Let me go for the day breaketh," but Jacob held fast saying: "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me." "What is thy name," asked the stranger; he replied, "Jacob." And the stranger said, "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob but Israel for Thou hast striven with men and with God and thou hast prevailed." Jacob was afraid no longer. When dawn broke he gathered some of the stones obstructing his path and built an altar unto God by which he faced the future with courage and with resolution.

This legend epitomizes our entire experience as a people; indeed, it epitomizes the experience of every man. It visualizes man's destiny as a constant and persistent struggle for the realization of his ideals to which he ascribes the name of God.

Man has ideals, he builds high, the spirit within him seeks the heights. He builds the heights above the hovel, the tower above the city, the castle above the mount: and when he has reached there, he goes higher and builds - in the air; reaching for the stars, and higher than any structure he erects is man's thought which, reaching out of his mind, aims for the very stars of heaven if not beyond.

Man does have ideals. He reaches for the stars. There is only one problem. He builds with stones and no building of stones can reach the heavens. Once a people tried ^(in vain) and their lives and hopes were crushed beneath the ruins of Babel's tower. All too often the very stones with which we strive to build are obstacles along the way arresting our upward quest. The ideal may be on the heights, but the building, alas, is in the valley.

Life offers a constant and non-too comforting contrast between what is and what ought to be, between our ideals and our achievement. Test it ^{out} ~~ought~~ in any realm and see. For millenia even unto ^{this} ~~our~~ day, the world has cried out: "We want peace, we have enough of war," and of course we have - ~~has~~ an ideal. But the brutal fact of history is our persistent failure to achieve peace, and we see about us a world which apparently has learned nothing, which is still filled with bitter rivalries and inveterate hatreds, a world which in a time of so called peace is spending more money on armaments and has more men under arms than any other generation in a time of war. Test it ^{out} in the realm of our personal ideals and see. We know well what we ought to be; we know what we wanted to be. But we know also what we are and thus ^{we} find our personal ideals crushed under the rocks of ruthless fact.

This then is the question before us: What shall we do about our persistent failure to achieve the ideal. It is a question which is of pressing importance especially ^{to} ~~for~~ religious people. We are the ones who proclaim the ideal - we are the ones who preach peace, and yet we ^{also} are a part of this war stricken world and must ask ourselves whether or not we are just selling dreams and lies and opiate for the people. ^{we must ask w/o not we are} ~~Are we fooling ourselves~~ when year after year we come before the throne of God, confess our failings resolving to do better, even while knowing full well that when next we enter the sanctuary we will ^{again} be beating our breasts for the very same sins. What shall we do about this disparity between ideal and achievement?

~~There are some who would suggest that if the ideal is beyond our reach,~~ ^{the} ~~of the real~~

(4)

There are some among us who would suggest that if the ideal is beyond the reach of the real, it ought to be adjusted downward to conform to our conduct. If the goal is too high, the realists say, place it lower and you will reach it. The trouble is, of course, that we lower our sights without ^{this} suggestion. We are past masters ^{at} the art of rationalization. Consciously or subconsciously we make compromise after compromise with our ideals - and then don't even live up to the adulterated ideal. Moreover, it is a dangerous ^{process} suggestion - for in effect it means that every time we fail, we lower our standards - and having done so once, we will do so again and again, until in the end we are left with no ideal at all.

"Well ~~then~~," says the cynic in our midst and within our hearts, "forget about ^{it} ~~all~~. Why bother with the ideal. ^{at all} For what is the 'ideal' when all is said and done...an ⁱⁿempty dream...a vain illusion...a source of constant discontent... Give it up and have your peace at last."

But ~~if~~ we do so, we must ask the cynic, by what and for what shall we live? Can a rudderless ship reach the harbor? Can man make decisions which he must make in order to survive without the guiding standard of the ideal? Can we live without the ideal? Just picture, if you will, a life without human values, a life devoid of truth and goodness, of beauty and of love! Eliminate the ideal that is the spirit of music and the beautiful strains of the cello are reduced to horsehair scraping on catgut. Without the ideal man's most precious things lose all their grandeur and become the butt of mockery.

Only with the ideal is life invested with meaning. Add love to a house and you have a home...add righteousness to the city and you have a community... add truth to a pile of ^{red} brick and mortar and you have a school...add religion to the ^{old} humblest edifice and you have a sanctuary. ^{Take just a little of the unceasing remedy for speed here - effort + your home circle} Take all these things together exalt them above their present imperfections, add to them the Brotherhood of Man ^{and} the Fatherhood of God, and you have the Temple of the Future, man's millenium, the ultimate pattern of his ideal vision.

No, we cannot surrender our ideals. We cannot compromise them. We do not seem able to achieve them. What then remains, what then shall we do?

The answer of ^{RELIGION} ~~Judaism~~ to this pressing question is unmistakable. Its mandate is epitomized by the story of Jacob's wrestling. Its clarion call is a demand for unrelenting effort. It bids us climb, even though we fal. It asks us place stone upon stone no matter how often the wall tumbles. It enjoins us to stand by our ideals, full and uncompromised, and pledged to attain them, resolutely and hopefully even though we are defeated again and again.

To what end, this struggle, to what purpose? Is there any value to multiplying failure?

Of course, there is. In the first place ~~it is~~ our striving to climb the heights despite repeated failure will, at the very least, serve to keep us from slipping lower still. In the second place, it is better to fail in a good cause than to succeed in an evil one - our dignity and integrity will remain unimpaired.

And most important of all, a perseverent struggle may result in a victory for at least a part of our ideals. The growth of the individual and society toward excellence in human life is slow and arduous. It is a growth which has many stages and some are within our grasp. Many one-time ideals have been realized. Public education was once only an ideal. Religious liberty was only an ideal. Equality before the law was only an ideal. Every decent thing on earth emerged as an ideal, and yet it is and was achieved by men - men who persevered in face of defeat - men who refused to cede to failure - ~~men who layed hand on the very stones that blocked their path and built of them an altar unto God.~~

Judaism holds forth not only a mandate, but also a consolation. By uniting the past and the present and the future, it teaches us to know that the builder of today builds unawares into the Temple of Tomorrow. It is not

incumbent upon every man to finish the task. Men will build after ~~he~~ ^{we} ~~are~~ gone, even as men built before ~~we~~ came to earth. Let each man lay his little brick in the wall - others will follow and all things will be accomplished in God's own time, for He is the ^{בנין} Master Builder.

Here then is the message of our day epitomized by the legend of Jacob's struggle. It is a plea for perseverance despite disenchantment, for a spiritual determination which will not recognize defeat, for men and women who will eternally proclaim: Never mind ridicule, never ~~mind~~ ^{from} defeat - give me the heart, O God, to fight - and ~~fail~~ ^{and fight anew!}

May this message sink into our hearts and cause us to mend our ways. May it enable us, ~~we~~ ^{we stumble} though (stumbling) in the darkness of the night, to lift our eyes on high and search the stars. May it strengthen the hands of a rabbi who may fail in many ways, but whose heart is pure, pure in ~~his~~ ^{his hope} ~~to~~ to help others, help them take hold of the stones of life's hardship and build of them an altar unto God.

Amen.

IIa.

Ties in Peril (Vancouver)

"Mah nouro hamokom hazeh...eyn zeh ki im beys elohim...vezeh shaar hashomayim."

These words of the Biblical poet strike a responsive chord within us, as we gather in solemn assembly - men and women from many, ~~distant~~ communities, but of one faith, bound together by a mutual, sacred cause." How full of awe is this place, Surely, this is none other than the House of God, and this, the gateway to heaven."

We are assembled in the courtyards of the Almighty, heeding a mandate as exalting and as enduring as the everlasting hills.

It is a mandate from on high: hikon likras elohecho yisroel...prepare to meet Thy God, O Israel!

It is a mandate from out of the past, a voice from yesteryear... the voice of seer and sage...the voice of hero and of martyr...

Who among us today does not sense this swell and surge of the past, this throb and thrust of Israel's ancient history.

Our prayers are the prayers of the past;

our songs, the songs our fathers sang a thousand years ago.

We stand here, also, in answer to a summons from within:

our souls seek solace and sustenance, we hunger for inner harmony, we long for inner peace...

weary of seeking without finding, weary of journeying without arriving,

we turn from our daily toil to the rest and quiet of the House of God...

here the noise of the market place is hushed...here the clamor of commerce

is silenced, and in the quiet of worshipful devotion we can hear and heed

the divine command: Be still, and know that I am God.

But we are here not just as individuals,

as single Jews seeking the solace of faith...

we are here as delegates of congregations ^{as members of a union of congregations} seeking the renewal of our communal lives

We are here to ^{find} ~~rediscover~~ those ^{re} ~~resources~~ of the spirit which can bring new force, new strength to ties which are in peril those ties which bind us as a community of faith.

These ties are not too difficult to ^{locate} ~~designate~~ ^{dispute}

Two main strands go into their making

and our program committee has denoted them by making them the two motifs which interplay to form the theme of this convention study and worship

the quest for the knowledge of God leading to his adoration.

Tomorrow's morning service and afternoon program will be devoted to the theme of prayer

I have been asked to speak of study as the sine qua non of Jewish survival.

It is a message which bears but should not really require the emphasis of repetition

for everyone, however slight his knowledge of Judaism,

knows that learning is a leitmotif of our faith,

that Torah is the ^{overarching all-embracing} ~~pre-eminent~~ symbol of the Jewish religion...

A Jew needs to study

a man must learn continuously if he is to fulfill the purpose inherent in life.

This is Judaism's conviction

This is the conviction which made the most representative portrayal of Jewish life

the picture of the young man in the ^{Beth Hamidrash} ~~cheder~~, pouring over the pages of his talmud folio

This is the conviction which made the Jewish people a people whose

highest office is learning, not inheritance, whose most treasured possession

is wisdom and not material good.

Barsel b'varsel vochad - Iron sharpeneth iron

A knife can best be honed against the edge of another knife

The sentiments of mishle are re-echoed in the words of a modern sage:

"He who teaches as books enable only babbles...

Not any profane man, not any sensual, not any liar, not any slave can teach

But only he can give who has'

He only can create who is

Courage, wisdom piety love - they can teach:

"He who studies in order to teach,

will be afforded the opportunity to study and to teach"

thus taught Rabbi Yishmoel, and then he added:

"He who studies in order to do, will be afforded the opportunity to study and to teach, to observe and to do."

Here surely is the foremost reasons why the mandate to study is incumbent upon us:

because study is the antecedent of action

thought quickens into deed

because knowledge and morality are bound in indissoluble union.

We have here

~~This~~ is another distinctive aspect of Judaism's concept of learning:

its reluctance to separate learning and ethical behavior

its insistence that knowledge in and of itself does not insure the security of

ITS AFFIRMATION THAT EVEN THE IGNORANT MAN CANNOT BE PRO-
men or of nations, ~~that neither is fulfilled alone~~ - that the ignorant
man cannot be pious, but that ~~in the same manner, the learned man who~~
that once divorced from morality, learning courts no true blessing but the curse.
is not moral ~~and the curse~~ ~~not the blessing~~ ~~but the curse~~

EVEN AS THE LEARNING ~~WHICH IS~~ ~~DIVORCED FROM MORALITY~~ ~~IS NOT THE BLESSING BUT~~
The Roman emperor Nero well serves as the exemplar of this truth. ~~THE CURSE~~

That he could play the violin was an admirable trait

it marked him better learned, more cultured, if you will, than others of his age

But when he blithely fiddled while Rome burned

he became the symbol of ~~man's~~ brutality ~~to man...~~

Nazi Germany is Neros modern counterpart

There certainly was no lack of learning in that country

Her leaders were always in the vanguard of progress

Her universities were mecca for seekers after truth

her poets were world figures and the symphonies of her composers are still played wherever orchestras assemble

Yet all of this knowledge and all of these talents found the apex of their unfoldment in what

in gas chambers, cunningly, skillfully devised to burn and to bury six million men women and little children as expeditiously as possible

Here is the most disheartening and at the same time the most significant lesson of recent German history

overnight the guardians of the Temple of truth became Hitler's professors

they cut the nexus between knowledge and morality

and when they did they felt free to pervert the truth and all their learning without the fear of heaven became a terrible thing.

The relevance of this lesson for our time does not require lengthy elaboration.

We live in crisis precisely because ^{Spill knowledge, knowledge & pleasure in the} we place faith in knowledge alone, ^{from alone}

^{But} The crucial problem of our age is not ^{a problem of knowledge} ~~material is not rooted in this realm~~

^{How} ~~ours~~ is not a material crisis, it is a spiritual crisis

it is a crisis of ideas and beliefs

were it rooted in the realm of the material alone

why then the vastness of human knowledge

^{man's} ~~his~~ advanced technological skill

our enormous productive capacity and the many new sources of power available to us would long ago have contributed toward a solution of our problem.

~~They are not solving~~ that problem...they are deepening it...heaping confusion upon confusion...leading us to the very brink of setback and of disaster.

The besetting fear of our age is not that of Malthus that sufficient food may not be available for man rather it is the fear that while food and water and the desireable things of life are abundant and near at hand the human race, like Tantalus, will, because of some perversity of fate, never be permitted to enjoy them the brilliant external achievements of our age serve only to make more phosphorescent the appalling stages of our inner decay.

AND STILL WE PERSIST IN LOOKING TO KNOWLEDGE ONLY FOR
Judaism's ^{faith in knowledge} concept of study is not of such a kind ^{isn't it}

It does not abide its disjunction from morality In Judaism's view, study does not attain its completeness until it is crowned by the righteous deed.

Reshis chochmo yiras adonoi...the beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord.

To study...to teach...to do...

this is the three-fold mandate implicit in Judaism's concept^{of} learning

the quest for knowledge transmitted to our children and transmuted into the

fibre of our daily lives. THIS IS WHAT WE MEAN BY LIMUD TORAH

~~THIS IS WHAT WE MEAN BY~~ ^{Torah}
~~Limud Torah...the pursuit of learning~~
~~THE TORAH OUR PRECIOUS~~
~~LIMUD TORAH~~ ^{magic ingredient of Jewish survival.}

^{STUDY OF THE TORAH}
^{LIMUD TORAH - THE PURSUIT}
^{THAT MAGIC INGREDIENT OF OUR}
^{SURVIVAL}

Does anyone doubt that ~~this~~ ^{it} is ^{so}...

study ^{was} the source of our strength, ^{it always was} our STRENGTH, our HOPE
~~our strength~~ ^{OUR LIGHT}
~~our hope, our light, yea life itself in days of darkness.~~

~~it gave our spirit freedom~~ ^{though our bodies were enchained and beaten}
~~BRINGING FREEDOM TO~~ ^{THOUGH THE BODY WAS ENCHAINED, + BEATEN DOWN}
~~down and crushed by tyrants rage.~~

Yea,

even as Israel kept the ~~gave~~ Torah

so ~~did~~ ^{has} the Torah keep us.

SETTING THE
SPIRIT ~~FREE~~
OF OUR PEOPLE
FREE

Chaim Nachman Bialik, that Titan of Hebrew Verse, captured the meaning of study to Judaism in what is ^{surely} ~~perhaps~~ his most magnificent creation. Perhaps you are familiar with his stirring lines:

Im vesh es nafshcho lodaas, he wrote, *If thou wouldst know*

If thou wouldst know the mystic fount from whence
they wretched brethren, facing slaughter, drew
in evil days the strength and fortitude ~~in~~
to meet grim death with joy and bare the neck
to every sharpened blade and lifted ax
or pyres ascending leap into the flames and saintlike die
with Echod on their lips

Is thou wouldst know the mystic fount from whence they wretched brethren drew
divine condloence, patience, fealty
and iron strength to bear relentless toil
with shoulders stooped to bear a loathsome life
and endlessly to suffer and endure

If thou wouldst know the bosom wither streamed
they nations tears, its heart and soul and gall
the mother merciful
who saved her loved son's tears with tenderness
and steadied lovingly his faltering steps

If thou wouldst know O humble brother mine
Go to the house of study
Thy heart will tell thee then that they feet tread the marge of our life's fount
than thine eyes view the treasure of our soul

~~THIS IS WHAT LIMUD TORAH MEANT FOR US AND THIS IS WHAT IT CAN CONTINUE TO BE FOR US PROVIDE WE~~
~~BE FOR US!!!~~ *THIS IS WHAT STUDY ALWAYS - A SOURCE OF STRENGTH FOR LIFE*
AND THIS IS WHAT IT CAN CONTINUE TO BE FOR US PROVIDE WE

~~Limud Torah...~~ may be restore it to its central place in our personal and
communal lives... *MAY WE RESTORE IT TO THIS*
~~May our eyes see then will our eyes~~

Then will our temples be what they were meant to be
houses of prayer and of study...where men [†]seek God in the companionship
of kindred and aspiring souls

Then, ~~also~~, having heard and heeded the divine command
^{and}
we will merit to witness the fulfillment of His promise

"Thou hast prevailed, O Israel, yea thou shalt prevail..."

Amen...

There is one aspect of this conviction which merits closer scrutiny
It is Judaism's conception of study as a religious obligation
its insistence that the pursuit of Torah is not so much a means
for the achievement of the religious life but rather its fulfillment.

To put the matter somewhat differently,
our faith does not equate Jewish study with religious education -
at least not in the present meaning of the term
for when we speak of religious education today
we refer to a program of study which leads to the religious life
which seeks to implant and to nurture a commitment to faith
~~But~~ Judaism assumes the devotion to faith and urges study as its lofty
expression

In its view religious education is not a preparation for religion
but rather its solemn exercise.

In a word - "limud torah" is a mitzvah, a mandate, a religious commandment
and because it is ^{observed} it is incumbent on young and old alike,
nay, if anything as a mitzvah, it becomes the prior obligation of adults!
The process of Jewish education may well begin in the religious school
but it is intended to extend well beyond its prescribed program of study
to last as long as life itself.

It is intriguing to note in this connection that from the perspective of J. history
the communal education of adults ^{antedates} antedates the establishment of schools for children.
First the ~~synagogue~~ ^{synagogue} was born - during the Post Babylonian period -
and synagogues were essentially institutions for the instruction of adults.
Some centuries thereafter -
during the Maccabean period and in reaction to Hellenistic challenge -
the Mishnaic master, Shimon ben Shetach, organized the first ^{Jewish} schools per se,
high schools for seventeen and eighteen year olds.

And only after the destruction of the second Temple were schools for children of elementary age established.

In other words, Jewish education began with the teaching of adults, gradually extending downward until, after six or seven hundred years, it finally reached the child.

The modern synagogue might be well advised to return to this historic pattern ~~which~~ gives priority to the education of adults

and not just out of a sense of loyalty to tradition, but for sound pedagogic reasons as well...

for if the science of education has taught us one lesson then surely it is this: our children make their commitments primarily by means of identification with the ego ideal...

they look more than they listen...

~~they~~ they follow the man who is long before the man who only persuades with his lips.

The spoken and the written word ~~simply~~ do not suffice

to develop character and attitude...to implant and to nurture faith.

Those qualities of the soul which we seek to implant in our children cannot be contained in a course or conveyed by techniques however refined

they cannot be ~~ordered~~ into a curriculum and taught from a text

these essential qualities are an aspect of all subject matter not just one of its parts and as a consequence they emerge not from a course from from an exemplar they do not flow from a curriculum but only from a human soul.

Perhaps Rabbi Ishmael had this ~~thought~~ in mind when he taught that

"he who studies in order to teach will be afforded the opportunity to study and to teach
^{adult}
~~parents~~ who study rear children who study whilst ignorance breeds only itself.

Parents whose own lives do not reflect a respect for intellect and learning cannot, in all justice, expect their children to become voide sefer, knowledgeable and committed Jews..

Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler
Commencement Address
University of South Carolina
May 7, 1987

It is a privilege which I greatly appreciate to be here and to participate in the joyous ceremonies of this commencement hour, joyous because it is in the nature of a release, some of you may even think of this moment as a release from a kind of prison.

George Bernard Shaw called college even "more cruel than a prison" for, as he put it, "In a prison, at least, you are not forced to read books written by the wardens."

The passing years will mellow your judgment, as it did mine, once you begin to reap the abundant harvest planted in your minds and hearts within these hallowed halls.

In any event, I take great pride in the fact that by granting me an honorary degree, the President and Faculty of this school have made me your fellow alumnus.

In musing about what I was to say to you, it occurred to me that for all the fine words that attend our most significant life ceremonies, there is nearly always a hand gesture that marks the actual moment of transformation and passage.

At a wedding it is the exchange of rings.

At a funeral it is the first handful of dirt thrown upon the casket; mourning truly begins with that gesture of finality.

At birth it is the slap on the behind that brings forth the newborn's first, gasping cry.

And at a college graduation? Only when the sheepskin is handed to you, followed by a handshake -- only then will you all sigh and cheer and no longer secretly fear that some computer somewhere has made a mistake that will force you to repeat your English composition course.

Commencement has genuinely occurred when you walk the aisle back to your seat clutching that diploma in your hand.

My musings about hand gestures led me to remember an ancient rabbinic saying which sharpens a paradox of life that merits being brought to your awareness at this hour.

I speak of life's self-contradictory demand which enjoins us to cling to its many gifts even while it ordains their eventual relinquishment.

The rabbis of old put it this way: "A man comes into this world with his fist clenched, but when he dies, his hand is open."

We begin by grasping, ultimately we must renounce, and the art of living is to know when to hold fast and when to let go.

* * *

Surely we ought to hold fast to life, for it is wondrous, full of a grandeur and a worth, full of a beauty that breaks through every pore of God's own earth.

We know that this is so, that life is passing wonderful, but all too often we recognize this truth only in our backward glance when we remember what was and then suddenly realize that it is no more.

We remember a beauty that faded, a love that waned. But we remember with far greater pain that we did not see that beauty when it flowered, that we failed to respond with love to love when it was tendered.

A recent experience re-taught me this truth. It happened less than a year ago, soon after I was hospitalized following a rather severe heart attack. I had been in the intensive care unit for long days and nights. It was not a pleasant place.

My own pains and fears aside, the noises of that hospital ward were not restful to the ear: the running feet of doctors and nurses, their whispering, the creaking of machines wheeled in for some emergency, and moans and groans and cries of pain, and on two occasions during those days the dances and the rattling of death, and then the weeping of the suddenly bereaved.

About a week after I arrived, I had to have some tests, but the required machines were located in a building at the opposite end of the hospital campus, and so I had to be wheeled across the courtyard in a gurney. And as we emerged from our unit -- the sunlight hit me. That's all there was to my experience. Just the light of the sun. And yet how beautiful it was -- how warming, how sparkling, how brilliant!

And then I looked about me to see whether anyone else relished the sun's golden glow, but men and women and children were hurrying to and fro, most of them with their eyes fixed on the ground seemingly heedless of all the glory about them.

And then I remembered how often I too had been indifferent to the grandeur of each day, too preoccupied with petty and sometimes even mean concerns to respond to the splendor of it all.

The insight gleaned from that experience is really as commonplace as was the experience itself: life's gifts are precious - but too often we are heedless of them.

Thornton Wilder makes this point in one of his magnificent creations, his immortal "Our Town."

In this play -- as many of you will recall -- a young woman who died in childbirth is allowed to return to earth for just one day. She chooses her sixteenth birthday as the day she would like to re-live. But as she comes upon the scene so familiar to her she finds that everyone is far too busy to relish the day's wonder.

And so she cries out: "Momma, Pappa, let's look at one another while yet we may." But nobody looks and nobody listens and all of the business of life goes on.

Saddened by it all, she begs to be taken back and these are her words of farewell. "Good-bye Momma, good-bye Pappa, good-bye Grovers Corners. Good-bye to clocks ticking, and hot coffee and newly ironed dresses...and lying down and getting up again. On earth you are far too wonderful for anyone to realize you."

She turns to the stage manager and asks: "Tell me, does anyone on earth ever realize life while he lives it...every, every minute?"

"No," replies he, "maybe the poets and the saints, maybe they do some."

And then she speaks her final words: "That's all human beings are, blind people..."

Is not this the malady that afflicts us? We are blind, blind to so much of the beauty which abounds in our world. We walk about in a cloud of ignorance. We trample on the feelings of those who love us. We spend and waste time as though we had a million years to live, always at the mercy of one self-centered passion after another.

How heedless we often are of our good until it is too late. Like birds whose beauty is concealed until their plumes are spread against the sky, our blessings brighten only as they take their flight.

Here then is the first pole of life's paradoxical demands on us: Life is precious, it is ineffably dear. Never be too busy for the wonder and the awe of it. Be reverent before each dawning day. Embrace each hour. Seize each golden minute. Cling to life with all your soul and might while yet ye may. Hold fast to life while yet ye may.

Hold fast to life...but not so fast that you cannot let go. This is the second side of life's coin, the opposite pole of its paradox: we must learn how to accept our losses, how to renounce, learn how to let go.

This is not as easy a lesson to learn and to internalize, especially when we are young, for when we are young we think that the world is ours to command, that whatever we desire with the full force of our passionate being can, nay will be ours.

Ah, but then life moves along to confront us with its grim realities and slowly but surely this second truth dawns upon us: Life not only offers us gifts. It also makes us suffer losses and we must learn to accept them.

In a sense, I suppose, this very moment in your lives involves a loss.

A contemporary humorist once described college as a place "that keeps you warm between high school and an early marriage."

Well, you must leave the warmth of this place, its security to go out into a colder world, and embark on a life of your own.

Nor will this be the first loss you suffered or will suffer. At every stage of our ^{life} we sustain losses -- and grow in the process. Why we even begin our independent lives only once we emerge from the womb and lose its protective shelter. Then we leave our mothers and fathers and our childhood homes. We enter a progression of schools and leave them. We get married and have children and then have to let them go, even as, in a sense, your parents are losing you today. We confront the death of our parents and our spouses. We must renounce our childhood dreams and accept the fact that life will not allow us to realize them. We must face the gradual or not so gradual waning of our own strength. And ultimately we must confront the inevitability of our own demise, losing ourselves as it were, all that we were or dreamed to be.

Life is never just a being. It is always a becoming, a relentless flowing on. We move through the various stages of life, as Shakespeare had it, each with its entrances and its exits, the infant becomes the boy, the boy the man, and there simply is no turning back.

When Rabbi Bunam, renowned Chassidic master, was lying on his death bed, his wife wept bitterly, whereupon he reproached her saying: "Don't you know that life is given to us merely that we might learn how to die?"

Life is the great teacher in the art of renunciation. To heed this truth is not only just and right. It is the very gate of wisdom.

Our parable of the open and closed hand confronts us with life's contrary, oxymoronic demands: First we were enjoined to cling to life, to appreciate its every gift. Then we are told: learn how to renounce these gifts, yea each and every one of them.

How can we do both, and at the very same time? More important, why should we do it? Why fashion things of beauty when beauty is evanescent? Why give our hearts in love when those we love will ultimately be torn from our grasp?

In order to resolve this paradox, we must gain a wider perspective, reaching beyond ourselves in time both past and future, viewing our lives as through windows that open on eternity. Once we do that we realize that though our lives are finite, the spirit born of flesh is infinite, that though our days will come to their end, our deeds on earth do weave

a pattern that is timeless. Our parents live on through us, and we will live on through our children. The institutions we build endure, and we will endure through them...

Shakespeare was wrong. The good is not interred with our lives. The beauty that we fashion cannot be dimmed by death. The love we give in life lives on long after we are gone, to bless the lives of others.

When Chanayo ben Teradyon, noblest of Jewish martyrs, was burned at the stake wrapped in a Scroll of the Law his pupils who witnessed his terrible agony cried out: "Our master, our teacher, what seest thou?" and he replied: "I see the parchment burning, but the letters of the Law, they soar on high."

Even so it is with us. Our flesh may perish, our hands will wither, but that which they create in beauty and goodness and truth, lives on for all time to come.

AMERICAN JEWISH
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If my baccalaureate address must have its message, then let it be this: Don't spend and waste your lives accumulating objects that will only turn to dust and ashes. Pursue not so much the material but rather the ideal, for ideals alone invest life with meaning and are of 'during worth.

Look about you and see: Add love to a house and you have a home. Add righteousness to a city and you have a community. Add truth to a pile of red brick and you have a school. Add religion to the humblest of edifices and you have a sanctuary. Add art and imagination to a series of spires and arches and you have a cathedral. Add justice to the far flung round of human endeavor and you have civilization.

Put them all together, exalt them above their present imperfections, add to them the vision of humankind redeemed, forever free of need and strife and you have the Temple of the Future, the kind of future we dream your hands will sculpt -- a future lighted with the radiant colors of hope.

Human beings have a tendency to confuse form with essence. They are prone to discern meaning in manners alone - the proper phrase or gesture, the appropriate garb - failing to go beneath the surface and test the spirit which motivates their expression.

Thus it is, the young people will often show greater concern for the marriage ceremony than for the essentials of a successful marriage. They fuss over the floral arrangements, thoughtfully discuss the menu, and enjoin the rabbi to make it short - as if the survival of their marriage depended on these things. Rest assured that no home ever shattered on the rocks of a faulty marriage ceremony, no, nor on the inability to provide a lavishly furnished home in the early days of marriage or at any other time. Broken homes are the result of a failure to perceive the essence of marriage. They are the consequence of an incapacity to comprehend what marriage really means.

Patriotism, in our case Americanism, is sometimes misunderstood in like fashion. Many would see its ultimate justification in outer forms alone: in the precision with which one greets the colors, in the enthusiasm that is mustered when the national anthem is intoned. And yet, the Quaker whose conscience will not permit him to serve in America's armed forces because he will not kill - not even America's enemies - may be closer to service than his fellow man who goes to war and may be closer to the real spirit of America, nay, he surely is, than the Southern bigot who spits on the negro even while he salutes the flag.

A similar misunderstanding occurs in the matter of religion. Here too form and essence are confused also in the understanding of religion, when institutional affiliation and participation is suggested as the ultimate test of faith. It is not.

A great many people whose names are on the rolls of synagogues and churches have no faith that really matters in their lives. A great many people who come to worship and who perform the varied rites of faith have no real sense of personal involvement with religion. They come because they feel they ought to or because society says they do.

They join perhaps because they feel that God's work merits support. But how many of these congregations have a religion which helps them instead of one which needs them? How many have a faith which sustains them in the hour of tragedy, which steadies them in moments of anxiety and fear? How many of them are truly influenced by their religion in their day by day decisions?

And so He does, for revelation is continuous; it did not cease with Sinai. God does not hide his light from any generation of His children who yearn for Him and seek His guidance.

We cannot grasp Him fully, to be sure. We cannot penetrate His mystery, nor hope to see Him face to face. But through the hard, unyielding framework of the unknown and the unknowable, we may catch glimpses of the divine. ^{His goodness passes before us,} ~~We see visions of His~~ ^{though not His face,} goodness, in the realm of nature and in the varied experiences of our lives.

Nor is God's language the language of men. He does not speak with the speech of men. ~~But then it is not only words which are capable~~ ^{But then it is not only words which are capable} ~~But words are not alone to convey deep meaning.~~ If anything, they are least successful to do so. They are but broken lights on the depths of the unspoken. Art ^{speaks a language more profound than words} ~~conveys far deeper meaning~~ - music, painting, sculpture. Nature ^{reveals for deeper} ~~speaks a language more~~ ^{profound} ~~profound than the language of words.~~ "Yom 1'yom yagi-ah oumer...day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night revealeth knowledge...though there is no speech, though there are no words."

Human deeds can speak with eloquence. Human relationships can disclose majestic meaning: a mother's love, a father's care, the devotion of friend to friend. When men rise to their best they reveal God more truly than ~~the~~ ^{doth all the} words of prophecy however striking, or ~~the~~ ^{these} creeds of theology, however persuasive.

^{THE} Opportunities for finding God are everywhere about us. Look to the heavens and see! Look upon the earth and marvel! ~~Behold the~~ Hear the harmonies of wondrous music, behold the beauty fashioned by man. Witness the miracle of birth and growth. Feel the awakening of love. Try to understand the lives of men whose ways are touched by godliness...men of every age...men of every creed: an Albert Schweitzer who gave up a brilliant many branched career to heal the sick in a forsaken village...a Mahatma Ghandi who by spirit only brought a mighty nation to its knees... A Lincoln who requited hate with love and facing his revilers was capable to say: with malice toward none, with charity for all.

Behold all this and say as did our fathers: we see this day that God doth speak with man.

Not even intellectual acceptance necessarily comes to the heart of the matter. Often one encounters men who prove by brilliant logic that there is a God, but whose personal religion is vacuous, empty, devoid of substance. They may have a foolproof theology, which enables them to speak their credos with assurance; but theirs is a recitation by rote which lacks personal involvement. The objective acceptance of belief is a far cry from subjective identification with it.

There is the heart of the matter: a subjective experience of God, a personal involvement with the divine...kavanah...a sense of reverence, a sense of sacred awe...as that of Moses when he saw the vision of the burning bush...or that of Israel's sons when they stood 'round Sinai and having heard the voice of God as did their leader Moses they proclaimed: we have seen this day that God doth speak with man. Such personal experience alone gives meaning to religion. Such feeling alone bespeaks a belief which stirs, a faith which sustains.

There are some who will raise their intellectual eyebrows and smile in condescension. Really now, do you mean to tell me that God actually spoke to Moses, that the children of Israel heard his voice? Why that is placing stock in miracles, in supernatural events which moderns cannot possibly accept!

And yet, when all is said and done, it doesn't matter, does it, whether we accept the Biblical story in its detailed, literal sense or merely as an interpretive account. In either case, the fundamental truth is the same: our fathers had a direct experience of God. Whatever it was that really happened, they knew for certain that God revealed himself to them. They knew it with a knowledge of the heart, a knowledge greater than the knowledge of the mind, transcending logic, or reason, or the testimony of witnesses. They knew it as the artist knows beauty though he cannot touch it. They sensed it as men sense love though they cannot see it, and yet their life is changed because of that love.

How empty our religion is without such knowledge. We can build magnificent ^{sanctuaries}, we can fill them to the overflowing in worship, we ^{can} ~~make~~ make their walls re-echo with the voice of our solemn rites. We have nothing unless we can say also as did our fathers: we have seen that God doth speak with man.

What a pity it is that many among us do not see, that our sense of appreciation has been dulled, that we have lost so much of our capacity to marvel at the miracles of life. Few achievements ^{little} arouse our admiration. Blandly we walk the way of life, unmoved by its essential magic.

Perhaps the surfeit of our blessings is responsible for this failure. We simply have so much that we take it all for granted: television which shows us scenes a thousand miles away, jets which streak from continent to continent, even a man made ~~whit~~ moon which repeats the orbit of creation. Or perhaps our capacity to marvel is blunted by the scientific and pragmatic temper of our times. We have been taught to accept as real only that which can be established by reason. We are enjoined to value only that which is of use, which is of practical consequence.

Whatever be the reason, there can be no doubt that ^{Many men} many of us have lost the art of ^{Acquaintance} imagination, the capacity for wonderment. To them the ^{of prophecy} prophets words apply: they have eyes but they see not, they have ears but they do not hear. They do not know, they do not understand, they walk in darkness. To one man a "primrose by the river's brim, a yellow primrose was to him, and it was nothing more." To another there is a clearer vision which finds "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones and God in everything."

To which class do we belong? Do we look for meaning in all things? Do we see God's goodness pass before our eyes as we behold His world pass before us? Do we hear a voice calling to us out of our manifold experiences?

We go back to Moses, that most inspiring figure in our history. Moses was a shepherd in the wilderness of Horeb. There were other shepherds there. A bush began to burn. Moses saw the burning bush. The others presumably did not see, and if they did they thought it just another mirage. Moses saw it and he said: Osuru no v'ere-eh...I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not consumed. Vagar adonoi ki sor lir'ous. And when God saw that he turned aside to see, then did he call unto him out of the midst of the bush saying: Moses, Moses. It was only when God saw that Moses had turned aside, only when he saw that Moses was sufficiently taken with the

wonderment, only then did He speak from out of the bush and reveal to Moses the mission and the mandate of his life.

My friends, there is a need in this down-to-earth, factual, busy world of ours, for us to re-awaken the sense of wonder in our lives, to regain the ~~capacity~~ imagination which which will make us turn aside to see and ^{see and} ~~therein~~ experience a sense of involvement with the divine. It is this sense alone which constitutes the essence of religion - a personal experience of God. All else is outer form, means to an end and not the end itself.

Synagogue and worship, prayers and rite all have but one purpose: to open our eyes that we may see through things into the heart of things, to see in blessed wonderment "all God's goodness" pass before our eyes and ^{to be moved to} ~~to be moved to~~ eager emulation. ^{Then} ~~Then~~ our lives will have meaning, purpose and direction, and our years on earth, whether they be many or few, will never be empty years.



We Never Learn

This evening and with this service, we prepare to observe our traditional Armistice Day. Members of the Jewish War Veterans are our special guests of honor, following services they will be our hosts at an Oneg Shabbat; and in a few minutes, just before the Kaddish, we will call out the names of those of our community who laid down their lives for our country and our cause.

In actuality, of course, this is no longer Armistice Day. It is Veteran's Day - some years ago we ~~designated it~~ designated it thus, and this change in name is most significant. It is symbolic, for in effect it constitutes tacit confession of our failure to fulfil the promise inherent in this day when its observance was first decreed.

After all, we cannot in all honesty observe an Armistice Day when we remember the many wars both great and small with their fearsome casualties ever great in number and never small fought since that day some thirty years ago, the day which was meant to spell an end to war. Armistice Day was established in the hope that it would soon be transmuted into an abiding day of ^{Alas,} peace. We did not even fashion an armistice, only an uncertain interlude between one frenzied fray and ^{still} another.

No, we cannot in all honesty observe an Armistice Day when we behold a world still immersed in violence. Every day we receive reports of new destruction in still another part of our globe: ^{more} ~~new~~ communities laid waste with the hurricane of fire, more smiling fields covered with the corpses of patriot dead, more hearts pierced with unavailing grief, and widows and their little children turned out rootless to wander unfriended through the wastes of their desolated land... And now calamity comes closer to our ^{homes} hearts for our own brothers are locked in deadly conflict. ^{with those who live about them.}

In all truth, we cannot mark an Armistice Day and rejoice. Its celebration would be mere mockery, a damning reminder of our failure and our shame!

In our Torah portio for today, we read the beautiful story of Jacob's dream, how he slept and in his sleep he saw "a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached the heavens." The rabbis of the Talmud, commenting upon this verse assure us that such a ladder is accessible to every man and that by climbing its rungs all men may reach the gate of heaven. The world does not appear to be on any such ladder; we stumble rather over the rungs of a treadmill, never able to ascend, ^{on life} ever in danger of ^{slipping} crashing into mud mingled with blood.

We are on a treadmill because we make the same mistakes over and over again. We never learn. The renaming of the day we celebrate this night serves to accentuate one of our recurrent mistakes, for by renaming it we also refashioned its intent. The dominant theme of Veterans Day as against Armistice Day is not so much peace as preparedness, or rather peace through preparedness. We now remember not so much the vows we made to the youth whom we sacrificed on the bloody altars of Mars, but we remember rather, so it appears, to "keep ~~on~~ powder dry" and to prepare more vigilantly and more vigorously for future battles sure to come. "In order to preserve the peace, prepare for war," this is the old-new motto of our day.

And what a worn-out oft-disproven motto it is and still we affirm it. We ~~now~~ pile high our mountains of munitions ^{to make our land invulnerable to a Host; even while we know that} that peace was never obtained by such a means. Multiplying munitions may strike fear and terror into the hearts of others; but that it keeps them permanently from waging war against us is denied by every fact of history. The fears which weapons induce serve only to unleash a relentless armament race which has never failed to cause some trigger-happy individual or group to move that twitching, itching finger to plunge mankind into war after war. Not thus will we establish peace on earth and redeem our debt to those whose memory we honor this night!

Was not this very same mistake made once again in the Middle East. For years now, ever since the armistice was first concluded, Israel has stood up before the United Nations and the ^{Western World} ~~Western World~~, pleading with them to use their good offices ~~in order~~ to translate the Armistice of 48 into a permanent peace. And what was the answer of the Western World: redoubled efforts to maintain an arms balance - and a curious sort of balancing it was: a few more guns to Egypt that ^{she} ~~he~~ may have as effective an army as Israel, a few more tanks to Jordan that ^{she} ~~he~~ too should be as strong as Israel and so on down the line with each of the Arab States. The ~~inevitable~~ result was ~~not long~~ in forthcoming.

Israel was not to blame - we need not now re-~~iterate~~ ^{her} ~~state~~ defense, for it was presented in a penetrating and ^{compelling} ~~convincing~~ fashion a week ago by Rabbi Klein. ^{But} ~~certainly~~ the free world has no right to point an accusing finger - its ^{casualty} ~~contribution~~ to the conflict ^{was} ~~is~~ not small - alas our own government has led the parade of retreat before Nasserism. Let the West rather heed the advice of a Churchill and thank Israel and now Britain and France for retrieving the tragic failure of the West. And Churchill knows whereof he speak, for it was he who vainly pleaded with the Western World when Hitler's armies ~~invaded~~ the Rhineland and later annexed Austria and the Sudetenland.

The free world owes a debt of gratitude to Israel for ^{ripping} ~~pulling~~ the mask off the paper-mache ^{dictator} ~~Hitler~~, and what a bluff he was, and what a bluff he was, a ~~xxx~~ few columns of Israeli soldiers neutralized twenty thousand of his minions. We can well imagine how our Middle East experts in the State Department feel, ^{now} ~~those~~ who counselled appeasement of Nasser and who urged us to develop him as a staunch military ally in the struggle against Russia. Perhaps they will at long last admit that Israel is a much safer ally ~~in the defense of the free world~~, Israel whose citizens ^{twice in one generation} fought alongside allied armies ^{and whose enemies conspired} and are now conspiring with those who are pledged to overthrow the free world.

We might add here, marginally, that we Jews of America, owe special thanks to Ben Gurion and Israel's armies for initiating the ~~downfall~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ ^{and still does} of a man who represented ~~and still is~~ a great threat to us personally, for Nasser was the most virulent source in recent years for anti-semitism here in America. It was Nasser who saw to it that American of the Jewish faith were barred from serving on any of America's missions and consular offices in the Middle East. It was Nasser who boycotted American business firms ~~employing~~ owned by Jews or employing Jews in important positions - an American business man ~~xxxxxxx~~ who wanted to deal with any of the Arab States ~~xxxxxxx~~ had to be cleared ^{first} as ~~pure~~ ^{pure} Aryan by the Egyptian Embassy in Washington. And it was Nasser whose paid agents travelled up and down America, ~~addressing~~ ~~Kiwanis and Rotary and Sunday~~ ~~clubs~~, planting the seeds of hatred against the Jew - and a few of them managed to come to Worcester in the guise of Middle east experts and what not. Surely it is no accident that among the quantities of supplies captured by Israeli forces in the Sinai desert were found also numerous copies of Hitler's Mein Kampf.

We Jews owe great thanks to Israel, and so does the free world, we have no cause for complaint, not even on the question of the United Nations. In some quarters, Israel's incursion has been interpreted as a threat to its existence. It is not. It has already ~~far~~ served as an impetus for the creation of an international police force, the one instrument which can convert the United Nations from a debating society into effective ^{free} ~~instrument~~ for the preservation of world peace.

Was not this also one of the recurrent mistakes of history, one of those lessons we didn't learn speedily enough, the lesson that an international association is ineffective unless it is backed by an international police. We may well ask why the United Nations did not take this step and act with equal promptness when Arab countries invaded Israel in 1948? In any event, we pray that the United States will not now repeat its mistake of the twenties by failing actively to support this international police and thus betraying Israel ^{now} as were those smaller nations ~~to support the Jewish state's~~ ^{who} put their trust in a League of Nations & were sold out to Hitler.

Don't for one moment think that a rabbi rejoices over the developments in recent weeks, beneficial though as some of the results might be and ~~quickly~~ speedy though the victory was. Would that there had been another way of achieving those same results. As for the victory, we are mindful ^{provided by a midrash} of the lesson commenting upon the passage in Exodus which tells of ~~the~~ our father's victory over Pharaoh's hosts by the Red Sea. When Moses and the children of Israel sang their song of joy, say the preachers of old, the angels on high joined with them, but God reprimanded them saying: How can you rejoice while my children are drowning in the Red Sea?

Yes, would that there had been another way...but there was not. Israel's dilemma can be compared to that of the people in the parable taught by the ^{Bratlover} ~~Serdichever~~ Rabbi who came to their King with the shocking report that whoever ate of the crop they were just harvesting became raving mad. "What shall we do, O King," they said, "if we don't eat the wheat, we will starve to death, but if we eat it we go mad." The king considered carefully and then, with a heavy heart rendered his decision: "Since no other food is available we shall have to eat it, but we ought to know that we are mad." In a world ruled by force and surrounded by antagonistic force pledged to destroy them, Israel was faced with the choice of a struggle for survival or suicide. It chose the former, while knowing full well that this too was madness, that force can never ever achieve the one element indispensable to its ultimate survival, ^{which is peace}. Israel chose the way of force in order to stave off immediate destruction and in the fervent hope that the free nations of the world will at long last wake up and pursue, not just talk about, the ideal of peace.

This too is our fervent prayer on this Armistice-Veterans Day. May we at long last learn the lessons of the ~~xxx~~ past: that multiplying munitions and balancing the instruments of war does not secure peace, that appeasing evil tyrants does not assure their good will, that an association of free nations can succeed only if its members ~~in xxxxxxxx~~ render it not only their voice, but the full support of their physical resources.

The world will remain on its tread-mill as long as we repeat the same mistakes. The rung of a ladder was never meant to rest upon, but only to hold a man's foot long enough to enable him to put his other foot somewhat higher.

By learning the lessons of the past we will ascend our Jacob's ladder and reach the gateway of heaven - ^{will} ~~and then~~ this Veteran's Day ~~will~~ be ^{long lost} ~~et~~ transmuted into a Day of Peace, for our time -- for all time to come.



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What Difference Does My Life Make?

Some time ago, a man who committed suicide left a final note recording his reasons. "I am not really needed," he ^{wrote} said, "Nobody gives a hang for me. I am just a peanut in Yankee Stadium. I'll step on myself once and for all."

What a poignant summation of a tragic life!...just a peanut in Yankee Stadium.. And yet, extreme an violent as was this man's end, his motivation is common enough, and his epitaph typifies the self estimate of modern man, for most men in our day no longer regard themselves as particularly important in the scheme of things, especially in their relation to communal and national behavior. Most people have come to believe that, except in small and insignificant ways, what they think and do is unimportant. They may have opinions, but see no way to give them weight; they may believe in a course of action, but they feel helpless to initiate it. "My life really doesn't make any difference" is the common plaint. "Decisions of consequence are made by the masters, lords and rulers of all lands, the very few vested with authority. Who dare challenge them, they certainly don't care about the ordinary individual." Thus we cry, and tacitly accept ourselves as insignificant beings, ordinary sort of men, peanuts in a pile, ants in an ant heap, floesam drifting aimlessly along the stream of life, anonymous members of a voiceless, faceless multitude, people who just don't count.

Our low ~~low~~ estimate of the individual offers a sharp and none too comforting contrast with man's high estate in religion's world view which hails him as the crown of creation. To be sure now, there were times when men of faith had their doubts. Overwhelmed by the grandeur of God's world - by the moon, the stars, the universe in all its vastness, - the psalmist exclaimed: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou thinkest of him." But quickly his faith conquered doubt and he fervently added: "Yet Thou ~~hast~~ made him but little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou hast made ^{man} ~~him~~ to have dominion over the works of Thy hands, Thou ~~hast~~ put all things under his feet."

Rabbi Philip
Tabor
117
Rochester

The rabbis of the Talmud went beyond Scripture in exalting the individual when they ordained that he who destroys ^{a single} ~~one~~ life, destroys the universe and his who saves ^{a single} ~~one~~ life, saves the universe. Not only is man master of the world, they taught, each ^{single} individual constitutes the world.

Modern man has ~~become sceptical of~~ ^{to doubt} this traditional ^{concept} ~~view~~ which, incidentally, finds its parallel in all religions. We take a dimmer view of ~~man~~ ^{the individual's significance}. One disillusionment after another about human nature has crashed down on us, dreadfully accentuated by two world wars and their aftermath, until human weakness and folly have become central in our picture of man. Our experience challenges our faith and so we ask: man the near-god, or man the peanut, how is it with us? Does each life really make a difference? Does the individual really count?

In venturing an answer to this ^{seemingly} ~~pertinent~~ question we must recognize first of all that mankind's progress, great or small, was always initiated by ~~its~~ individuals. No reform, no correction of an evil, no advance of any kind in all the annals of history was ever begun without an individual to get it started.

When Israel was enslaved in Egypt, and had come to accept the bitter yoke of servitude, who kindled the flame of freedom? Was it engendered by the spontaneous revolt of the embattled masses? Did the elders and sages of the community appeal to Pharaoh? Of course not. ~~We know the answer.~~ It was an individual, ~~therefore obscure or almost so,~~ ^{later} once a pampered courtier and ~~then~~ a humble shepherd named Moses who roused his people from their lethargy and dared challenge the mighty tyrant.

When our people was threatened with extinction after the Roman conquest of Judea, who secured the survival of our people and its faith? Was it a council of generals, or a delegation of prominent royalists or even the King of our people who prevailed on the good graces of the conquering emperor? Of course not. It was a lone enthusiast named Yochanan ben Zaccai who ^{obviously} ~~secured~~ permission to establish a humble academy at Yavneh.

When, to take an example from more recent and ^{general} ~~American~~ history, the fires of the ~~American~~ Revolution were burning low and men watched the flame of its hope go down towards the ashes of despair, how were those fires rekindled? Who breathed them back to life? Was it the Continental Congress? Did someone appoint a Committee on Unrevolutionary Activities? Was it a special Presidential Commission? Again, it was an individual, theretofore obscure, or almost so, Tom Paine, whom George Washington credited with saving the revolution.

And so we might continue with name after name, in area after area of human advancement - ^{Conduct - Human Treasures for America, Public Education - Judaism & Christ}
When anyone asks therefore, does my life make a difference? surely the first of the answers is this: it depends, and always must upon the individual. If you have the conviction, the courage, the patience and the persistence, and if you are willing to put everything you have into the venture, win or lose, you can go immense distances, in this time or any others, as an individual.

But still, it may be objected, these that we have mentioned were after all outstanding people. They had unusual talent and vision, conspicuous ability -

or at any rate they had the sort of boldness that the majority can't claim.

^{It is not given to all of us to be as great as Moses or as wise as a Ben Zeev.}
What about the ~~majority of that people~~, the John Does or even the Casper

^{Most of us}
Milquetoast. ^{People} who are more timid, who don't in the least want to save the ^{single headedly} world but just want to buy a television set. ^{What do they} count for individuals?

^{we}
We count for much, oh so much, would only that we were to recognize our real power!

In the first instance, we create the spiritual climate which either nurtures or hinders progress.

^{אין אדם יכול לעשות דבר אחד בלי אחרים}
No visionary, however wise, can realize his ideal, without followers willing to countenance his ways. An Abraham Lincoln would have remained an unknown country

lawyer, had he failed to receive the support of many ordinary people, themselves unwilling or incapable of exercising leadership, but at least eager to accept the wise guidance of another. Similarly, a noble Supreme Court Decision of our own day will remain a dead letter unless hundreds of simple people will effect integration in the ordinary relationships of their every day lives.

It is frequently said that there are no longer good leaders: men and women with the force of character, the mentality, the vision, the integrity to steer us through the dangerous waters all around us and the storms ahead. I am not so sure that this is true. I am doubtful, very doubtful, whether good leadership is as widely welcomed as it used to be; and whether it is recognized when it appears. ~~the~~

I choose to think that there are men who can steer us to the harbor of safety and of peace, but they can emerge only if we encourage and support them, if we create the atmosphere under which we shall be well and wisely lead. And whatsoever the least among us does or fails to do, says or fails to say, nolens volens, affects that atmosphere, for better or for worse. *or his / in*

Here then is the first area in which each life counts. If we cannot lead crusades or initiate reforms, we can at least create the conditions in which crusades can be effectual and reforms successful. Ordinary people who believe that the individual counts can produce the outstanding individual and then help him count.

But beyond this

significant
~~In the second place, each individual is important for his voice, no matter how weak, is added to the voice of others and together with theirs can lead to great strength.~~
may elicit a response in others, &
voice he can command
~~challenge the worth~~
I know I rehearse a tautology, but apparently it is a truth so commonplace that we completely overlook it, else we would not ask what difference our lives, ~~make~~.

What is a drop of water by itself? What can be more harmless? What is weaker? What is less potent for any effect? It is mist, invisible. It rises through the imperceptible paths of the air, and hangs unseen in the air, till the cold strikes it and it congeals into clouds, and falls in the form of rain upon the earth. Sinking through the earth, the tiny drop of water reaches the line of rocks from whose side it oozes out and trickles down, when, finding other drops as weak as itself, they unite their forces; and the sum of the weakness of all these drops goes to make the rivulet, which flows on, making music as it flows, until it meets counter streams. These, combined, form the river; the river forms the estuary, and the estuary the ocean itself. And now, when God has

has marshalled the sum of the weakness of myriads drops together, they lift the mightiest ship as if it were but a feather, and play with the winds as if they were mere instruments of sport.

We, in our singleness, in our individuality, may be weaker than a drop of water and more unstable; but as gathered together in the great ocean of life, we attain to a might that makes life not ignoble, but sublime.

Let no one say, therefore, what difference does my life make? There is not one among us who does not every day appreciably affect our total situation.

Individuals are every hour making a difference in other individuals and therefore in all of us. By the stand we take, or refuse to take, in ordinary conversation, in every day deed, we encourage either the true or the false, the good or the bad; we make it either easier or harder for other people to have courage, to deepen their convictions, to make right choices.

It is out of the vast complex of the relationship of individuals that the impulse comes to raise our standards or to let them drop. When we express our ^{individual} prejudices, we deepen prejudice in others; when we counter them, prejudice everywhere receives a set back. When we ^{betray our ideals, the universal struggle} ~~deprecate ourselves, men everywhere~~ ^{lose honor and the image of man like unto God is besmirched.} ~~lose honor and the image of man like unto God is besmirched.~~ ^{But when} we stand by ^{our} ~~our~~ convictions, gently but firmly refusing to be intimidated, either to please a friend or to appease an enemy, conviction everywhere finds stronger rootage. ^{When} ~~if~~ we deprecate ourselves, all men lose honor, ^{but if we} ~~but if we~~ + the image of man like unto God is besmirched. But if we recognize our powers as individuals + act upon that recognition, men everywhere will gain stature + strength + the confidence indispensable to survival.

In a stirring MIDRASH we are told that when Moses came down from Sinai + saw ^{the} people dancing about the golden calf, he smashed the two tablets of the law, but ^{gaily gathering faith} ~~gaily gathering faith~~ cried out: 'A 16 230 23. Now everything depends upon me. ~~They are~~ ^{also} beholding a world dancing frantically about a mushroom cloud, may we also each of us proclaim - 'A 16 230 23. Everything depends upon me. And may this recognition of individual responsibility + ^{the age of} ~~the age of~~ ^{proven} ~~proven~~ lead all mankind toward the universal land of promise + everlasting peace.

Enda ore

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Rabbi Roland B. Wittelsohn
Central Synagogue of Nassau County
430 Remond Avenue
Rockville Center L. I. N. Y.

What do we Owe our Children

No responsibility in all the world is as weighty and as difficult of fulfillment as is the task of rearing children. To take a young life entrusted to one's care, to nurture it, to mold it, to lead it past the many known and unknown dangers threatening its every ^{step} ~~breath~~ - there is no mandate as demanding as that and surely no parent ever took his child along life's perilous path without revoicing a hundred, nay, a thousand times, the fearful cry of David when he sought news concerning Absalom his son:

"Hashalom La-na-ar - Is my child yet safe?"

Nor is there a problem in life as perplexing and as unpredictable in its consequence. All too often, here, the very best counsel is of little avail. Too often, the noblest intentions miscarry and devoted effort is mis-spent. Even the rabbis of the Talmud, who had abounding faith in man's capacity to master ~~the universe~~ life and its problems, bemoaned the rearing of children as a near impossible task; they spoke of 'tsar giddul bonim' ^{of} the sorrow, the pain, the anguish of raising sons, and they declared that more often than not the result 'tolui bemazal' depends on nothing more or less than mazel, on sheer luck, on ordinary ever-ellusive good fortune.

Where sages despair, what shall lesser men say? And still, the task is ours to fulfill as best we can, and we do well, carefully to consider and constantly to seek the better way of guidance and instruction.

Our young people themselves can help us in our quest. "He who is thy offspring can ^{few} of teach thee," holds an ancient proverb, and its truth applies here with great force.

Our children can speak to us of their need, and their need can give primary direction to our effort in their behalf. What do our children want? What do we owe them?

What is the fundamental need of the present younger generation?

I have been asking our young people these questions and they give me an intriguing, near unanimous answer. For the past five years now, ^{As you may know} I served as Dean of the Leadership Institute of the National Federation of Temple Youth which attracts ^{hundreds of teenagers} ~~students~~ from all parts of the country and from every stratum of the Jewish community. Every year I

I ask them to complete a questionnaire which poses this central problem. If you were given the choice, what would you ask first and foremost ^{of} ~~from~~ your parents. ^{Social standing, economic security or stability} ~~They will not~~
majority agree - not economic security as we might expect, nor social standing; they want their parents to give them a sense of emotional security.

The reason for their longing is not far to seek. It is rooted in the instability of their environment. Uncertainty is the dominant temper of their world with its unrelenting and terrifying threat of imminent total destruction, and, alas, uncertainty is the dominant quality of their home life what with the business of their parents in running and in getting and in spending and their concern for everything under the sun except the task of building warm and strong family affection.

How do our young people expect their parents to provide this added emotional stability. I ask this also in my questionnaire and ^{our young people give intriguing answers.} ~~their answers are intriguing:~~

I want my parents to be with me more, says one.

Another complains: my parents always tell me what not to do, what not to eat, and not to smoke, and not to drink, but they never tell me what I should do, what books to read, what plays to see, what concerts to attend.

Another felt that a stronger religious faith could bolster her sense of security, "but," she added, "though I suppose my parents want me to be religious and that's why they sent me to Temple, they don't seem to have much faith. At least they never come."

Still another wrote; and this is interesting: "I think I would have a greater feeling of emotional well-being if only my parents were to have greater confidence in me. They want me to confide in them, to tell them everything. But they never allow me to share their plans and their problems." How often we under-estimate our young people and their sense of self-reliance. Parents want to protect their children by hiding their problems from them, but as a consequence, they exclude them from the family circle, and deny them the aegis of their family union.

And here is the most interesting answer of all and it re-appears in varying form with high frequency: "I might feel more secure, if my parents were less lenient with me, if they weren't so easy going." This is nigh to a revelation. It was for me. Our children want more discipline. They want their parents to exercise more ethical authority. We think that they want to be left alone. In reality they want to be guided firmly.

A mother of our own congregation - as a matter of fact, she is a member of the Temple Board - recently told me a story which ^{bears} ~~brings~~ out the same point. It appears that her daughter wanted to attend a social function ^{of} ~~which~~, for a variety of reasons, her

^{disapproved}
parents deemed ~~unwise~~. The daughter pleaded her case with fervor: all her friends and class mates were going and what was good enough for them was good enough for her. But all to no avail. For once her mother was firm. The girl stormed out of the room with tears in her eyes, and the mother spent a sleepless night regretting her severity: perhaps she was too old fashioned; if the other mothers agreed to send their children then surely her misgivings about the dance must have been ill founded. She almost relented, almost, that is for on the very next day she chanced to hear her daughter announce her decision to a friend, ^{but} not in a spirit of shame and rebellion, ^{kind you} but with a measure of pride: My mother won't let me go... and her friend responded not in sympathy, but with a touch of envy in her voice... ^{To be sure now,} ~~Of course,~~ no teen-ager will go to his parents and ask for more discipline, for more moral guidance, but this is what they need, this is what they respect, this is what they seek.

Why do we fail to give them this moral guidance?

Perhaps because we are too indolent, too slothful, too lazy to muster the added energy required...

Or perhaps because we ourselves lack in strong personal conviction. Our moral code is drawn not in blacks and whites but in varying shades of grey -we recognize no clear cut wrong at least as far as we are concerned. How then can we impose ~~an~~ absolute what we affirm only as relative.

Or perhaps we fail to exert ethical authority with our children because of an exaggerated Freudianism or because of misunderstood modern educational theory which decries suppression and undue authority and which urges a permissive relationship of camaraderie between parent and child. "We don't want to rule our children with discipline and authority" is the slogan, "we want to rule them with love." Now no one ~~can~~ gainsays the worth of love. Love is fine, love is beautiful, it is the noblest of virtues. But love is not love if it means merely the inability to say no. Love is not love if it ignores the evil. It is not love if it compromises the good for the sake of being loved. Love is a power for light. It is a revolator. It discriminates between right and wrong, it extols the former and disdains the latter. It strives to extirpate the evil and it enthrones the good.

It is not suggested by any means that we try to recreate the authoritarian home of a past generation. The new won spirit of camaraderie between parent and child can be for good. But if it is to be a blessing it ought not be wasted for petty pleasantries. Let it serve a ^{higher} aim - enabling the parent to exercise moral persuasion on his child, ^{drawing} ~~impelling~~ parents and children ^{together for good purpose} ~~to do good things together~~, to read good books together, to listen to good music together, to worship together in harmony and holiness.

^{Sum & substance of our message:} One ^{sympathy} ~~sympathy~~ to our children is to speak to them. My friends, we have had a birds-eye view of a serious problem. Much more could be said, of course, but an ^{inroad} ~~inroad~~ into thought has been made. The sum and substance of our message is really one of confidence and faith, confidence in our capacity to meet our responsibilities, [&] faith in our young people.

This applies to our ^{Society} ~~community~~ as a whole - when we consider the young people of our total community. Our youth today ~~taken~~ ^{viewed} as a whole is certainly no ~~worse~~ ^{more pleasing} than the youth of ^{any previous} ~~another~~ generation. I came across these lines in a book some days ago: "The earth is degenerating ^{more than} ~~these days~~...bribery and corruption abound...young people are degenerating..." does this sound familiar, current? Actually it is part of a clay tablet of old Assyria which was inscribed a 1000 years before Abraham, nearly 5000 years ago.

As for our ^{own personal} ~~own~~ children here too we can look forward with confidence. ^{Our children} They may give us much reason for worry, but after all, we ourselves added many a gray hair to our parents' hoary heads. Basically, our young people are sound in spirit and heart, and they will respond to the best, provided we as adults, refrain from pandering to their lower instincts and appeal to them at their best. ~~is~~

A famous European dramatist once wrote a play about a master craftsman who fashioned a beautiful church bell but then, during a time of terror and war, and to prevent its capture by the enemy, he sank the bell to the bottom of the lake. Every once-in-a-while, stirred by the waters, the muffled sounds of the bell rose from the deeps, bringing much joy to the heart of its maker. There is such a bell in the soul of our youth. It is attuned to an appreciation of beauty and truth and love. May God give us the wisdom and the patience to reach and elicit its vibrant tones. Then will ^{Isaiah's} ~~Isaiah's~~ glorious vision be fulfilled, and men everywhere, beholding our children, will say of us: that we did not "labor in vain nor bring forth for terror, that ours is the seed, blessed of the Lord!"

One of the more common of platitudes ventured in discussing the religions of the world in their relationship one to another is the opinion that all religions are basically alike. "Religion is the response to a universal need," we are told, "and since the need is universal, the response is universal also." We hear this argument most frequently when Judaism and Christianity are compared, especially by Jews in approaching their Christian neighbors. It is readily admitted to be sure, that different peoples living in different parts of the world and influenced by their peculiar environments and histories have cast their religious response into dissimilar molds. But only the mold is admitted to be different - the rituals of various religions, the language of their prayers, their ways of describing God. In such matters religions may be and are at variance, but not in their core, in their essence; ~~in~~ ^{goals of religion constitute the soul of faith &} their ideals and ~~their goals insofar as man is concerned.~~ The soul of all faiths is held to be universally the same.

No serious student of religion can accept such statements as truth. A fundamental unity of ideal and goal among religions cannot be claimed. All rivers may run into the sea, but their course and channels differ widely; even so does each religion have its own texture and pattern, each faith its own perspective. Judaism holds views which are radically divergent from Christianity, which differ decidedly from every other faith, and this applies not only to outer form, but also to inner ^{view} goal, ^{to} and ideals, ^{to} and attitudes toward life and human destiny.

In the fall of the year just past, Abba Hillel Silver, Rabbi of Cleveland's Temple, renowned leader of American Zionism and foremost preacher of the American rabbinate published a volume entitled "Where Judaism Differed." In this work, which well adds to his not inconsiderable reputation as scholar, Dr. Silver compares Judaism to other religions, particularly Christianity, stressing the distinctiveness of our faith and the uniqueness of its teachings and ideals.

The scope and challenge of his inquiry is great. To begin with, the author was confronted with the task of formulating the beliefs of Judaism. This is not as easy as it may appear to be on the surface, for our religion is not a precisely articulated creed, it has no compact system of beliefs which can readily be reduced to catechismal principles. It is not the product of one country, nor is it the product of one age. When we speak of Judaism, we

Far different is the spirit of Judaism. Our faith is suffused with optimism, with an unshaken affirmation of life. As a matter of fact, we have no doctrine of salvation in the true sense of the world, precisely because the thinkers of our people and the molders of our faith never felt that man's life or his body is so steeped in sin and evil that he needs ~~to~~ be saved from life itself.

Judaism rejects all dualism. It ~~taught~~ ^{teaches} that the body cannot be charged with all sin, ~~and~~ ^{even as} the soul cannot be credited with all virtue.

To what may this be compared- says the Midrash - To a king who owned a beautiful garden which contained splendid figs. Now he appointed two watchmen therein, one lame and the other blind. One day the lame man said to the blind: I see beautiful figs in the garden, come and take me upon your shoulder that we may both eat of them. Sometime after the owner of the garden came and inquired of them: Where are those beautiful figs? The lame man replied: Have I then feet to walk with? The blind man replied: Have I then eyes to see with? What did the owner do? He placed them lame upon the blind and judged them both together...

In the basic thought of Judaism, the body and soul, good and evil are not cosmic forces in eternal conflict wherein one must destroy the other. They are complementary attributes of God's creation which are reconciled in the wisdom of God,

As a consequence Judaism teaches that man should avail himself of every opportunity for enjoyment and happiness. One need not and should not renounce any gift of God. Rav, who together with Samuel established the leading academies in Babylonia and made it a center of rabbinic studies, is quoted as saying: "A man will some day have to give an account unto God for all the good things which his eyes beheld and of which he refused to partake." ~~And that~~ ^{And by good he} meant every gift of God, including those which are ~~meant~~ ^{intended} primarily to satisfy the bodily needs of man - food and drink which sustain his life, the 'yetze horah' which perpetuates it. Sexual asceticism or celibacy was never accorded the dignity of a religious value in Judaism, to marry and to beget children in order to preserve the race was considered a divine command. The rabbis held that one of the principal questions which a man will be asked on the Day of Judgment is the query: "Did you or did you not fulfill your duty in respect to establishing a family."

Moreover, the spiritual leaders of ~~xxx~~ Israel lived and worked among their fellow men. They did not isolate themselves from the community. The cloistered virtues of convent life ~~made~~ ^{had} no appeal to them. They were not mendicant or friars going about with staff and bowl begging to sustain themselves while attending to the purification of their soul. They

Now there can be little doubt that man has always and will always be afraid of life, for there is much in life to make him afraid, much that is mysterious and evil, much of pain and sorrow. On the one hand there are the vast and imponderable forces of nature which overwhelm us - floods and storms and earthquakes and ~~flood~~ ^{plague}, on the other hand we face the destructive forces of society which we seem unable to control - wars and invasions, tyrannies and oppressions. And overshadowing all these there is the dread knowledge of ultimate death which no man can escape.

Most religions seize upon these ~~apparent~~ ^{fact + build} sadness and fatality of human existence and build an elaborate doctrine of salvation upon it. Some religions hold that the fact of life itself is evil and that man can do no better than to renounce life and to seek the extinction of his self-hood. These of you who are familiar with Oriental religions know that this teaching is the very essence of Hinduism and Buddhism. These religions hold that all existence is suffering, that the cause of suffering is human craving and that men, therefore, should expend every effort to free themselves from the world of senses, to extirpate human desire by the roots, to deaden the will to live and thus to seek self extinction in nirvana, in a blessed release into nothingness.

Greek philosophy and subsequently Christianity and Islam, held a somewhat different view of life, but their conclusions are similar at least insofar as life on earth is concerned. ^{not in the whole of life, but in its essential part in it} Plato and Paul both perceived the ~~root of all evil~~ in the duality of life, in the conflict between body and soul. There is beauty in human existence, they said, but this beauty and joy and truth is restricted to the soul of man. ~~The human body is evil~~ But the soul of ^{so} ~~man~~ is the prisoner of his body, and the body is evil, and the soul of man cannot attain ^{the body's} unto its innate holiness and joy until it is liberated from ~~its~~ bondage. And thus they taught that the body of man be held in contempt, that the flesh be subdued, that its urgings and prompting be renounced, through austerities and fasts, if possible through celibacy and isolation from society. ~~Not~~ all men can succeed in this endeavor, to be sure, but some men can - Plato called them the philosopher-kings, ^{the} Church fathers called them monks or nuns, priests or saints, - and they urged that all men strive to emulate their good example.

Lest you think that this is ancient Christian doctrine no longer ^{is} affirmed, it need only be mentioned that the leading Protestant theologians of our day, taking their cue from Kierkegaard, are the exponents of unqualified Pauline Christology and its pessimistic view of human existence.

did not run away from life out of fear of its temptations and social stresses. They felt that life itself constitutes the only battle ground where victories of the spirit can be won.

Don't for one moment think that Judaism shut its eyes to the evil and suffering in the world. It did not deny their reality. But it refused to make suffering a virtue, and pain ~~the key to the mystery of life~~ the key to the mystery of life. Sorrow is a part of life, taught the Rabbis, man must learn how to accept it, whether it be merited or unmerited, without resentment, bitterness or rebellion. He should confront it with courage and with dignity. He may even wring some blessings from the curse of tragedy, for sorrow can steel man's character, sorrow can break his inordinate pride. It can make him more compassionate, more understanding for the needs of others. ^{It can make him more appreciation of his many blessings.} But men should never glory in suffering, they should never seek the crown of ~~exquisite~~ pain, for it is not only in pain that character grows, the blessings of life and its joys provide a far more fruitful soil for human greatness.

And thus it is that in Judaism man's loftiest task in life, the service and worship of God must be rendered with ^{gladness} joy. ~~Ivdu es adonai besimcho~~ - worship the Lord in ^{joy} gladness. Sadness is tantamount to idolatry. Sing to the Lord as long as you live. For though there is a darkness in life and the shadow of death, and sorrows and tribulations, and wrongs and anguish and the ^{fragments of human aspiration} broken ~~hopes of mortal man~~, the spirit of man need ^{never} ~~not~~ be utterly cast down. Hochili Lelohim... hope in the Lord, for though "weeping may tarry ~~in~~ for the night, ^{surely} joy will come in the morning."

Our brief survey of only one chapter of Dr. Silver's work ^{labors} is enough to give an indication of the extent of his ~~work~~ and its worth. No one who reads ^{the} ~~its~~ pages ^{of this} with care will deny that Judaism has always and still does offer an approach to life and faith which is unique. This uniqueness does not spell superiority over other faiths. Other religions too have ^{woven} ~~molded~~ noble patterns of life for their followers and have succeeded in molding great civilizations and men of noble character. Nor need this uniqueness of Judaism obscure the underlying unity of the human race or the common needs of human life which all beliefs of mankind aim to serve. It is imperative though, that Jews be aware of the uniqueness of their faith so that they may be filled with a greater pride in faith and that they may be better equipped to fulfill their ~~lives as Jews~~ and if only to heed Judaism's noblest injunction which bids us join hands with men of good will everywhere ~~to work~~ firm in our convictions and reverent of theirs, all together working toward the day of universal reconciliation of all peoples when "they shall not hurt and destroy in all God's holy mountain for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

While it is yet night

Happy are we to behold and to participate in the solemn ceremonies of this hour - the dedication of a new flag which is to be the proud possession of Young Judea in welcome assembly here tonight. This flag is more than mere bunting, the pleasing combination of multi-colored cloth - it is a symbol, symbol of a spirit unquenchable the spirit of the Jewish people who fell a thousand times, but who rose again and again out of the very ashes of death determined to enact that role which, by God they were destined to play. Still more thrilling than the dedication of this flag is the ~~large~~ fact that so many young people are here to accept it. By their presence they signify their determination to carry aloft the banner which others before them have so nobly borne. It is because they are so determined that we welcome them to this sanctuary and this service. And it is to their noble task and its fulfillment that we invoke upon them God's most precious gift - his blessing.

The concluding chapters of the Book of Leviticus - the portion known as Bechukosai read as our scriptural portion for this evening embodies the famous Tochacha or admonition addressed by Moses to the Jewish people. Having declared the ~~ethical and ceremonial injunctions incumbent~~ upon each and every Jew the great law-giver contrasts in startling and terrifying form the blessings and curses which await the people. If they obey the law of God then peace will be theirs, if they break it, dire calamity will befall them.

These passages have never been a favorite of mine - no one likes words of reprove or messages of ~~xxx~~ doom. What is more tragic, of course, is the fact that in our lives and in our times it is the curse and not the blessing which has been fulfilled: Ve-hey-vey-si mou-reych

bilvovom

I will send fear into your hearts
The sound of a driven leaf shall chase you
You shall stumble one upon the other
And you shall have no power to stand before your enemies...

Is there a more poignant description of the shattered nerves, the crushed spirit, the fear and the trembling which fills the hearts of men today? Truly, the curse and not the blessing have been fulfilled.

The tragedy presented and brought to mind by the chapter as a whole finds some measure of relief in the reward which is held out for faithfulness to God:

"I will not wholly despise you or abhor you, says the Lord. Im Bechukosai telechu. If you will indeed walk in my statutes and keep my commandments... then will I give peace in the land and ye shall lie down and none shall make you afraid."

This juxtaposition of the blessings and the curse focuses our attention on a singularity of Jewish law and lore: no curse is ever pronounced in all of ~~the~~ the Bible and in much of our rabbinic literature without the relief of a blessing, a word of consolation always follows the message of doom, a ray of light ever manages to penetrate the deepest dark. More than this, it is only after the presaging of doom that words of hope are ever proclaimed and the lesson is inescapable: We can find great hope in adversity. Defeats and failures should never overwhelm. Look forward, not backward and learn to turn the disappointments and the tears of yesterday and of today into the laughter and the triumph of tomorrow.

This lesson should be of particular meaning to the young people assembled here today. Youth is generally described as self-confident but it would be equally correct to speak of the self-doubt of youth. In every youthful heart there is some doubt of the future. What will the world be like when I grow up? Look at it now! Where will I find the strength to face it. The answer of our parasha is clear: Each curse contains its blessing. Each defeat can be built into a victory. Out of the very stones of life's hardships will come strength.

No one can go through life without a defeat somewhere along the line. Even young people entering adulthood know this. They have their records of failures in school, in friendship, in athletics, in their social life. ~~It is easy to yield to such failures and to surrender~~ It is easy to yield to such failures and to surrender to depression and self-doubt. But if we surrender, if we throw up our hands we fail to take advantage of the one benefit adversity provides, and that is the chance to grow, for only in overcoming defeats and obstacles does man grow. Each failure can uncover a weakness within us, a weakness which can be overcome. If we utilize our defeats to learn the truth about ourselves, if we never permit one defeat to be wasted then the hard stones of failure will serve our future.

~~Why should man while living worry over his failures and sins of~~
Why should man while living worry over his failures and sins of which he is the controlling master, thus says the Scripture. Mend your errors and they will become warnings, incentives to higher and to nobler striving! Cast your mistakes into the depth of the sea and do better in the years to come. Turn the defeats of yesterday into the victory of tomorrow and out of feebleness new strength will come. This is the same Jewish view of morality. Life moves on. Abide not moaning among the ruins of the past, lest like Lot's wife thou become a pillar of salt. "Forward" is the clarion call of Judaism. Leave the hidden things to God. Yours is the duty that lies before you.

My message, the message of hope in adversity, does not address itself to the individual only. It concerns our forward pressing age as well. It applies not only to the individual Jew, but to all of the Jewish people. It applies not only to the individual man, but to humanity at large.

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In working for the peaceful existence of our people in a peaceful world, we permit past and present failures to knock hope clean out of us. We yield to cynicism and to despair. "Three sneers for everything, three cheers for nothing has become the motto of our day." We fail to see that this very hopelessness inside ourselves is the major obstacle to world accord. Hopeless situations may make people hopeless, but ~~essentially~~ it is the supreme and ultimate truth that hopeless people make the situation hopeless. Give us enough with the capacity to learn from past defeats not to be overwhelmed by them and people with hope ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ the world can be remade.

We Jews certainly ought not to be among those who surrender to despair. We are what we are and we have what we have precisely because our fathers had the capacity to ~~dream~~ ^{herald} ~~the day while it was yet night~~ ^{dreams of a better future} and to fight for the realization of their dreams in face of mighty obstacles. The greatest advances the Jewish people ever made - in the realm of physical as well as spiritual progress - were made in times of greatest evil. The debacle of the forties gave ~~xxxxxxxx~~ birth to the Jewish State; the inquisition led to the creation of America; during the Roman conquest Jochanan ben Zaccai came to the fore and ~~spiritual~~ rabbinic Judaism was born; and during the Babylonian exile - that ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ time of anguish and tragedy when the first temple was destroyed and the Jews first tasted the bitterness of exile it was an Isaiah who dreamed a dream and saw a vision which, to this day ^{still} remains as the loftiest all human endeavors, as the full realization ^{fact} the dreams and visions of all the seers and sages of all the lands and all the ages.

Here is the secret of Judaism's wonderful endurance - the capacity of the Jew to rise from past defeat, to learn from past and present failures and to work toward the future ~~xxxxxxxx~~ in face of all obstacles.

The reminiscences of a history unparalleled the expectations of a future grader and brighter than human mind ever imagined. That is what made the Jew the worlds hero and martyr and that is what will ever endow the Jew with the power to do and to accomplish what no other people would or could. Yes, forward is written on Israels banner for the Lord who ever walked before Him will ever be with him. be not dismayed.

Here then is the message of the parasha and of this day. the message of a faith in God despite defeat...the ^{plea} ~~xxxx~~ for a spiritual determination which persists in face of obstacle... Never mind ridicule.. never mind defeat...let others sneer as they may...no darkness can put out the light in your hands unless you yourself drop the candle.

May we be like Chanticleer of Rostands famous play. All night long the play about animals as the symbols of men he calls for the dawn, ~~Thxxxxxx~~ he demands that the East release its warming, light and life giving rays. The other animals think him mad. What are you crowing for. Do you really think that you can wake the sun. But soon the sun does rise and the other animals break out in shrill cries of joy. They sing when all is rosy. They believe in light, but only when they can see it. Not so Chanticleer. He heralded the dawn while it was yet night.

Amen.

WHY INSTITUTIONAL RELIGION

Privilege....never can resist ~~practically~~ resist a call to be with NEFTY...
a source of strength...physically not, tired of keeping up with you
spiritually you are refreshing

enthusiasm infections

your attitudes so wholesomely natural, unhampered by the
civilities which older people feel bound to assume
your ideals are still unblemished, ~~untouched~~ untouched by the cynicism
which is the constant concomitant of bitter life experience

That is why all rabbis enjoy their work with youth and come to youth functions
whenever ~~practically~~ possible.

Worcester - breath of home

Word of thanks in your behalf to Belmont's people

There was a time when ~~NEFTY~~ was considered a mere infant
in NEFTY...no longer...in course of past few years
it has become one of the finest of Youth Groups in
our area...thanks largely to the devotion of
Mrs. Hoffman, encouragement of Rabbi Grollman

It has become mandatory for after dinner speaker to offer some humorous story
Ministers on difficult ground

Best I can do is to tell you a Jewish shaggy dog story
Mah Nishtanno...King Arthur

Let us get to this matter of organized religion and its purpose and validity in ~~prax~~
our lives as individuals and as a community...

There are those who challenge its purpose and validity. A wit once said that we suffer
from two kinds of Jews...revolving door Jew
cardiac Jew

many such Jews, in truth many such Christians also who say that they are religious
in their bones that they have ~~not~~ for all this organized religion with its
reitualistic trappings rooted in ancient superstitions....

All too often this kind of talk becomes merely an excuse for indolence. When a cardiac
Jew tells ~~me~~ you, for instance "I pray when the spirit moves me, and it just so happens
tha the spirit doesn't move me at 8:15 every Friday night." But when you ask such a
person precisely when the spirit moved him to prayer last, invariably he confesses that
that the spirit has not moved him to prayer in a very long time...

Nonetheless, it would not be fair to label all objection to organized religion as
a sign of indolence...

it would not be fair to label all cardiac Jews and Christians as members
of a do-nothing party

There are a great many honest, devoted, liberal minded people, people whose lives
are filled with deeds of goodness, people who lead lives of communion with God who none-
theless have serious reservations about Organized religion, about the institution of the
synagogue and the Church.

For one thing they remember the Black record of institutional religion, they remember
the many crimes which were perpetrated in the name of religion and many of which
are listed on the ~~short~~ summary sheet which you received from Rabbi Grollman

They remember those ~~mass~~ mass murders committed by institutionalized
religion in the name of God - ~~they remember~~ those countless
men and women who were burned at the stake by the leaders of the
inquisition

and their fellow martyrs who were impaled by the sword of the
crusaders

They remember the acts of ~~individual~~ repression perpetrated
in the name of God - aye a Galileo imprisoned by the Church,
a Spinoza, and a DaCosta exiled from the Jewish community

And they witness the social impotence of religion in matters
and their conscience is outraged...just to take one example: war

And yet
This particular argument against organized religion can be answered with relative ease,
for after these things that we have mentioned were committed by men who pretended
to act in the name of God, but who most assuredly did not hear God's voice...
moreover, there is "another side of the coin" as Rabbi Grollman put it

every evil can be counterbalanced by a good
and when the ~~good~~ two are put on the scale, the good outweighs
the evil a hundredfold...

Let me read only one paragraph which is quoted on your worksheet...

Albert Einstein... the greatest mind of our generation and here is what he
said:

When the Nazis came to power, I looked to the German Universities to speak
out, but they were silent. I turned to the press, but there was no word from them.
I turned to the Great Labor Unions but found them speechless as well. Only in the
Church and in the Synagogue were valiant voices raised on behalf of man."

There can be no doubt about it: religion has brought into this world the stuff which
makes life not ignoble but sublime...

Most melodies of that beautiful symphony which is our civilization
were first sung by the representatives of organized religion...

think of music, poetry and dance,
think of the sciences and literature
think of the ideals which move us still

trace these values to their origin, and ultimately you come upon the voice of God
spoken by man within the framework of organized religion.

These things which I have said go to answer one great argument against organized
religion, but there is another objection to the institution of the Church and
synagogue, ~~xxxx~~ and it is a more serious, ~~thought~~ one. A great many ~~people think~~
thoughful people think and say: religion when all is said and done is a very
personal ~~xxx~~ and intimate matter... at its finest it is a personal relationship
between man and God... it is the soul of man addressing its source...

it is relationship is a private concern, we mar its beauty when we
make it a matter of public interest, we lessen its perfection when we
try to express this relationship in ritual or in the institution

There can be no doubt about it... At its noblest religion is just that, the soul of
man bound to the sole of his maker in silent communion...

The contemporary American philosopher Alfred North Whitehead
expressed this idea succinctly when he said: Religion is what a
man does with his solitariness... ~~Martin Buber~~

To be with God, ultimately means to be alone... ~~Martin Buber meant~~

Surely some of man's noblest confrontations with the divine have taken place in
solitary...

think of ~~x~~ Moses of ~~xxxx~~ and the burning bush
of Elijah hearing God's in the wilderness
and yes, think of a Job, alone for all intents and purposes, sitting
on a dung heap and nonetheless having the power to exclaim... Va-ani
jodati goali choi... I know that my redeemer liveth.

Our own experience proves this also... think of those moments in life when you had a sense
of the divine... were these not also moments of aloneness, though you might have been
with others... when you were enraptured by a beautiful sunset
or enthralled by a deed of human kindness

In those moments you may have wanted to cry out with Reb Levi Yitzchok of ~~Mer~~erditchev:
addressing God:

Where I Wander, you... where I ponder, you.
Only you, you again, always you, you, you, you
When I am gladdened, you, when I am saddened you
Refrain
Sky is you, earth is you... you above, you below...
In every trend, at every end
Refrain.

Try to express what you feel during those ~~many~~ rare moments of communion with God...you cannot...they constitute religion at its ultimate...

These Godly moments
when we symbolize these moments we detract from their beauty
when we institutionalize them, we mar their holiness
when we even speak about them we impair their perfection,
because they belong to that realm of the infinite which cannot be compressed in the finite form of language. In this sense even prayer becomes a form of idolatry...

And yet we must...symbolize

institutionalize this communion

for we must talk about it

for these compelling reasons, and I want to outline only a few possible answers which you can then discuss more fully in your workshops...

~~Let us begin with...~~

1. To begin with, I think, psychological necessity, a law of life
every inner feeling ultimately has to gain outer and concrete expression

love some one

hate someone

similarly our sense of communion — *Sachariv to God*

2. Necessary for transmission of faith

give this
how else can we mystical ~~expressions~~ sense of communion to others and to our children.

we have to talk about it and talk as we have seen is already a symbolization

why not use other symbols then, for they are so very much more

effective than words in the teaching of ideals

{ Providence...sukkah

{ Freedom...Pessach

Add symbols together and form an institution you have the most powerful educational force alone capable of transmitting the heritage of faith from generation to generation...

3. Disciplined confrontation ^{of man} with the ideal

we have seen that a man who relies on his spirit to move him is rarely if ever moved...

there has to be an atmosphere in which the growth of that spirit is rendered possible...

there has to be a place where man will be confronted with the ideal at regular intervals during his life...

in the world of every day life it is so very easy to get by with our conscience...

out there the little penny is so close to our eyes that we cannot see the sun

out there there ~~is a darkness which completely~~ we can always find people whose lives are worse than ours

out there there is a moral darkness which completely obliterates the greyness of our own compromises and surrenders

but within the synagogue and church a man is confronted with the ~~very best~~ absolute and no man can be his best without such confrontation

4. Lastly, I think that it is within the institution that we can find the spiritual companionship and resultant strength which is necessary to lead the life of the ideal.

Alone we are too weak, alone we are like drops of water...

What is a drop of water, when all is said and done, what is weaker, less potent for any effect. It is mist, invisible, it rises through the imperceptible ethers of the air and hangs in the air until cold strikes it and it congeals into a cloud whence it drops in the form of gentle rain upon the earth beneath. Sinking through the earth, it reaches the line of the rocks from whose side it oozes forth and trickles down until it meets other droplets as weak as itself. These combine to form the rivulet which flows on making music as it flows until it meets counterstreams. These combine to form the river, the river becomes the estuary, the estuary the ocean itself, and when God has marshalled the sum of the weakness of myriads of tiny droplets together they lift the mightiest of ships as if it were but a feather and the play with the winds as if they were mere instrument of sport.

Installation Acceptance

This is a solemn and fateful mement of my life. I stand in the presence of those who loved and taught me - my mother and my father. I am inducted into office as assistant rabbi by a ~~man~~ ^{Rabbi Klein}, my senior colleague and friend, who ~~has~~ ^{+ has nurtured it from youth to lastly adulthood} serves this community with such distinction. And I stand before ~~this~~ ^{the} congregation the men and women of this holy congregation who will look to me for guidance. I feel weighed down by the burden ^{of responsibility} which now lies upon me and anxious doubts as to my ability assail me. With every fibre of my being I re-echo the words of Israel's liturgical poets: Hineni Seoni Mi maas, niras venifchad mipachad joshev thillos Yisroel. Behold I am poor in deeds, overwhelmed and affrighted by the awe of Him who dwells upon the praises of Israel.

Kind words have been spoken. Good wishes extended. I accept both, but not for myself. I accept them for this congregation. A congregation that honors its leaders, honors itself - thus said our rabbis. Moura rabboch, ~~Smoras~~ ^{(does to} Schomayim. A congregation that honors its leaders, ^{to} honors God.

It is appropriate that my induction be on ~~the Sabbath~~ ^{this of all Sabbaths}, Schabbos Bereshis. - not just because of the coincidence of two beginnings, a beginning for me and a new beginning of scriptural readings, but also because exactly ~~thirteen~~ fifteen years ago today I occupied another pulpit and recited the words of Genesis. It was my first Sabbath in America, ~~a~~ ^{the} haven of refuge, a land which has meant ^{come to} so much to me. And it was also ~~myxxxxxxxmitz~~ the very Sabbath on which I recited the prayers and blessings marking my bar mitzvah. Schabbos Bereshis, today, is my bar-mitzvah schabbos - a golden day in the religious calendar of my life.

The words of my haftara are meaningful, especially today. In ^{powerful} ~~sharp, incisive~~ ^{bold striking language} ~~language~~ ^{language} the prophet Isayah enounces the words of God on High: ^{181 's yk}

I, the Lord, have called Thee in righteousness, and have taken hold
of Thy hand, and kept Thee and set Thee for a covenant of the wpeople
for a light unto the nations. ~~Lifkouach enayim ivrous, lehot~~
~~To open the eyes of the blind, to loosen the bound, to free from the~~

Naturally these words strike a responsive chord in my heart at this
emotional moment, but it is my hope thatthat the vibrations set up by
that chord within me will reach out and attune themselves to yours,
achieving that spiritual harmony and understnading between rabbi and
congregation without which all our efforts are foredoomed to failure,
but which we we can march forward hand in hand with the blessed assurance
that we can fulfill in our lives and in our times ^{Isayah, higher, we can fulfill the hope & prayer of} ~~the destiny and task ordained for all of us: Lifkouach enayim ivrous~~

^{to open the eyes of the blind, to etc}
This is my fervent prayer ^{at} ^{moment} on this ^{day} of my induction.

One of the saddest things in the world, when you come to think of it, is the boredom of so many people in the midst of ever increasing opportunity for fullness of living. Here we are, with unlimited means for enjoyment at our command, means which kings of yesterday dared not dream possible, and yet we often find life unbearably dreary and dull. Our advanced methods of production allow us more time for leisure, thanks to man's inventive genius we can travel further and faster, the miracle of electronics has brought good music art and literature to our very fingertips, a veritable flood of books challenging our knowledge in every sphere of learning beckon to our reach - and with all that so many among us are literally bored to death.

Geroge Bernard Shaw, whose caustic tongue destroyed the mask of pretense hiding many a human failing, tersely portrayed our malady when he said of a friend by way of eulogy that he "died at thirty and was buried at sixty." Measuring our reaction to life, many of us give up the ghost long before our final breath is drawn, or at best our life assumes the form of a longish doze, a trance-like state of semi-consciousness, neither fully awake nor fully asleep, a seemingly endless yawn stretching wearily unto death.

Far different is the spirit which is reflected in the Psalm we read as our Haftarah portion a moment ago. Its gifted author lived in an age far less complex than ours, far less exciting, an age which offered not one of the many means of living we deem vital, yet listen to his life-affirming words: "Hodu Ladonoi, Kiru bishmo, Houdiu Boameem alilosov... Give thanks unto the Lord call upon His name, make known his doings among the people. Sing unto Him, sing praises unto Him, speak ye of all His marvellous works." Whatever else we may read into these lines, there can be no doubt that the Psalmist was filled with a zest for life, that he was fired with the rapturous thrill of being.

This contrast of attitudes to life and means of living underscores a truth so old that whenever it is freshly realized, it is as though it were original and new. A man's world is no greater than his ^{soul} ~~home~~. Our enjoyment of life depends upon what is within us and not upon what is out there in the world. If we fail to discover the wonder of life, it is because the capacity to marvel has failed to come alive in ourselves. If the world does not stir us to the depth of our being, it is because we refuse to bare our full emotions to its magic touch. ~~Sweep~~

There can be little doubt that our sense of appreciation has been dulled, we have lost much of our capacity to marvel at the miracles of life. By and large in our age we are not given to amazement and to wonder. Few achievements arouse our admiration. Blandly we walk the way of life, unmoved by its essential magic.

Perhaps the surfeit of our blessings is responsible for this failing. We simply have so much that we take it all for granted: television which shows us a scene a thousand miles away, jets which streak from continent to continent in hours, even a man made moon which repeats the orbit of creation. Were it not for Sputnik's threat to our safety, surely we would take this marvel in our jaded stride as we accept all wonders.

We can trace this process and its consequence in the more immediate experience of our lives. Our young people, for instance, receive so many things so early in life, that they are less excited about their wonderful and expensive ^{below us} gifts ^{Some of us} than ~~we~~ were at the gift of shiny penny years ago. And as they grow older the pattern continues: a ranch home as a wedding gift, furnished with every comfort and appliance, even to the car in the garage...and the result, the inevitable consequence, ^{sales with it} ~~monotony~~, boredom, for what else can match these initial gifts, what else is there to await,, and with boredom comes the frantic search for excitement which some find vicariously in the world of make-belief and others more dangerously in infidelity. Whatever other reasons there are for the failure of modern marriage, here surely is a common cause: too much too soon...The title of an actress's autobiography aptly epitomizes a modern sickness and tragedy: an overabundance of blessings leading to boredom.

Our capacity fully to respond to the marvels of our world is blunted also by the scientific and pragmatic temper of our times. We have been taught to accept as real only that which can be established by reason and we are enjoined to value only what is useful. As a consequence we are oblivious to the greater part of ^{life's blessing} ~~available experiences~~, unprepared and unequipped to perceive ^{them} ~~it~~.

This is not to belittle the accomplishment of the practical and scientific in our age. These are vital to our existence, but they are not the whole of life. There is a greater portion of reality which cannot be established by reason, which is rooted in imagination and emotion. And there is a world of worth which is of little practical use.

Consider the realm of beauty which is subject neither to the practical nor to the scientific. To be sure now, the musicologist can analyze a Beethoven symphony, its movements and harmonic structure, but can his program notes even begin to reveal the wonder of hearing its performance? The chemist can determine the precise pigment of its many colors, but can he convey the deathless beauty of Michelangelo's Last Judgment? The physicist can tell us that water is made up of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. That is a scientific fact. But is that all we can say about water, is that the sum and substance of its essence? Shakespeare read books in brooks and the ^{find sweet singing} ~~fisher~~ found firm faith in stilling waters. Surely their discoveries are as real as are the technical formulas of the laboratory.

The newer discoveries of biology and psychology tell us much about man. We can describe a person in terms of cells and chromosomes. We can pierce his nature with the X-ray machine. We can measure his behavior with tests and explain his actions by psychic laws. But all this ^{feels} ~~reveals~~ really very little about man. To know more we must go from fact to feeling, from ^{intellect} ~~reason~~ to imagination. Only then can we begin to appreciate his capacity to think, his ability to dream, his willingness to sacrifice. Only then do we fathom the depth of his love. Nor can reason reveal the mystery of new life, it cannot retell that most wonderful of moments when we look for the first time at a child that is born, when we feel the clasp of tiny fingers, when we hear the cry of surging life.

How flat and narrow is our world also when we measure our means alone by their usefulness, when in Rilke's happy simile, we take hold of peacocks feathers to tickle each other while oblivious to their intrinsic charm. Multitudinous are life's blessings which are of little practical worth yet which as gifts are ^{all made} ~~passing~~ wonderful: the song of day and the silent wonder of the night, the earth's green covering of grass, the blue serenity of sea and sky, the petals on the flower and the wings in the air, and friendship and beauty and love...

In all truth, we can be bored by life only so long as our heart is as empty as the world is rich, when we fail to sense the wonder of the world, because of the surfeit of our gifts or because of our unwillingness to gather only that which is of use.

There is another inner failing, somewhat related to the first, which contributes to our sense of boredom. It is our failure to embrace life spontaneously, to give ourselves wholeheartedly to whatever we undertake to do. T.S. Eliot diagnosed this malady well when in his best known poem ~~haxkaxxixxhaxx~~ The Love Song of Alfred ^J Prufrock, he has his hero say:

I have know~~n~~ them all...
Have known the evenings, mornings afternoons
I have measured out my life with coffee-spoons

There we have it...the smallest, most prudential common measure available - a coffee-spoon. Life measured out in spoons, emotion administered with a medicine dropper. No greatness of desire, no surrender to noble purpose, no "all thy ~~haxkaxxixxhaxx~~ heart and soul and might" in anything.

Why this failure - long - to skilful to master the added energy required -
Perhaps we are indolent, or perhaps we are afraid, afraid that if we give ourselves too ^{holife} much we may be hurt; after all, everything in life ^{being in us mixed with the thing of how long} has its end - joy, beauty, love - ultimately we must surrender all and the fonder our embrace, the greater the pain of our loss. But whatever the reason ~~fixxxxxfailure~~, there can be no doubt that partial living exacts its penalty in boredom and in failure.

Beauty seen through narrowed eyes can bring no joy to life...

A love which is not wholehearted, is worse than no love at all. There is no true aliveness in it. You cannot build a marriage out of the maxim that one coffee spoonful must match another and that the thing to watch is that no one gets a spoonful ahead. What is needed rather are the spontaneities, the wholeheartedness, the simple gladness of an outgoing love...

This matter applies to our religious life as well. Our faith too is often only partial. We do not committ ourselves without reservations. We cannot say with the psalmist:

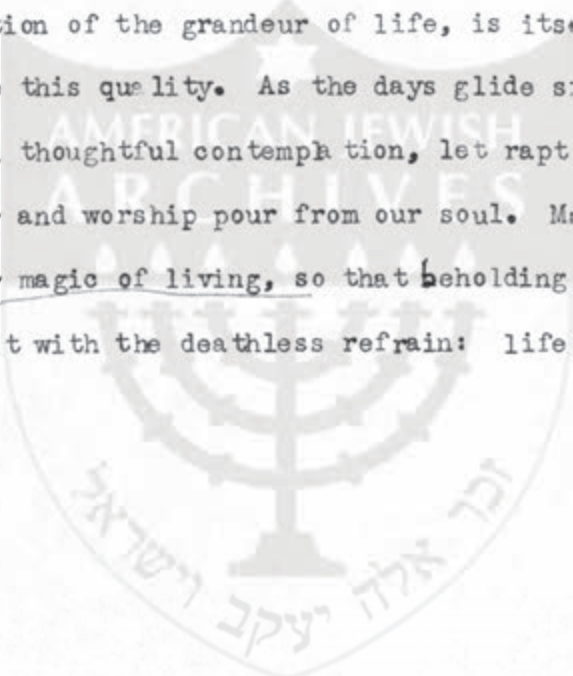
O udeh adonoi bechol libi - I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart. And that is why our religion lacks power, that is why it fails to sustain us in ^{moments} the ~~hours~~ of our greatest need.

People whose lives are rich and exciting, invariably are those who have learned to live from the fullness of the heart. Wise was the counsel of the ancient teacher: Kol asher timzoh jodcho la-asous, bechol cochacho taaseh...whatever thy hand findeth to do thou shalt do so with all thy might.

Here then is the sum and substance of our message: our heart is the doorway to the world. We cannot find in it what we do not find in ourselves. Its wonder is comensurate with our admirations...its beauty responds to the beauty of our soul.

Ultimately we receive from life what we bring to life...its blessings are as rich as our capacity for understanding and appreciation...It behooves us therefore not to pray for ever more munificent bounty: more flowering, more fruitage, more gladsome quivers of the happy flesh. It becomes us rather to pray with humble hearts that whatever be the gifts bestowed, they may stir within us an ever growing sense of wonder and of worth.

For the increasing revelation of the grandeur of life, is itself the highest gift. Let us, therefore, nurture this quality. As the days glide silently by and our soul accompanies their march in thoughtful contemplation, let rapt admiration spring forth up at every step. Let wonder and worship pour from our soul. May each new hour bring us a fresh sense of the sheer magic of living, so that beholding the deathless beauty of the world, we may respond to it with the deathless refrain: life is wonderful, life is good.



Yiskor - Shemini Atseres

With this day and service, we bring to an end the cycle of our festivals: Rosh Hashonah, Yom Kippur, Succos and now, Shemini Atseres. All of these holidays have a specific purpose and meaning, all, that is, except Shemini Atseres which is of unknown significance. The Bible orders its observance without elucidation; it is presented as an appendage, as it were, to the festival of Succos. Only Rashi, greatest of our Biblical commentators, ~~vent~~ ventures an explanation: he likens the ordination of this day to the request of a king who asks his guests to remain even though the time of their stay has reached an end.

"We are guests in the House of the Lord during the high holiday season. With Succos, the time of parting has come. But God says to us - ^{ROSHE OLAI PERIDACHEM} ~~Tsar di Peridaschem~~ - I am so sorry to see you go. Stay yet another day."

We trust that God is reluctant to see us go. But be that as it may, we are reluctant, we are sorry, we regret the passing of our festive season, those precious days of sanctity in our lives, days of awe and days of rejoicing, that all too brief span of time in which the divine spark within us all, slumbering during the remainder of the year, is awakened to a bright and burning flame.

The sweet sorrow of leave taking fills us at this hour, and we do well to dedicate a portion of it to the contemplation of a more personal leavetaking, to Yiskor, to the memory of our near ones and dear ones who are no more.

We are assembled for a service of sorrow. Each of us at this hour revives in memory someone he has loved and lost: a mother or father, a husband or wife, a friend, or even ^{little} a child. And as we recall our dead, our hearts are filled with grief and loneliness, with yearning and with pain.

Grief, sorrow, loneliness - these are the emotions which fill us at this hour, surging within us like the billows of a storm-tossed sea. ⁶ Our dominant desire is for comfort and for consolation. We long to find the still and stilling waters by which our soul may find its rest. ~~Is there a balm to still grief? Can one escape grief? Is it possible to still the anguish of bereavement? It must be possible, for we all know people who rise~~

Is there a balm for Gilead? Can one assuage grief? Is it possible to still the anguish of bereavement? It must be possible for we all know people who rise above their losses ~~of the moment~~ and face the future with spirit undismayed. Consider such people for a moment and see: they accept the sorrow of life as the unavoidable ^{price} ~~penalty~~ for its joy, they resolutely refuse to yield to the obsession of despair, and with iron-bound determination they return to the tasks and responsibilities of life. In such a manner do they meet death's challenge to the spirit, and so must we, in like manner, answer the demand of the hour of bereavement.

Acceptance is that hour's first demand, the willingness to see and take life as it is, with its shadows as well as its lights, its pains as well as its ^{pleasure} ~~joys~~. Over-absorption in sorrow invariably is the result of an imperfect view of life - a view which sees purpose only in pleasure. A well rounded vision ^{of all life} assigns sorrow its due ~~place~~ and prevents it from passing legitimate bounds.

There is a tender tale told in the literature of the Greek people about Prometheus who is supposed to have brought not only fire, but all life to earth. In the process of molding the ~~animals~~ ^{we animals} out of clay, he used up all the available supply of water. Consequently, when he came to make man, there was nothing with which to bind the clay together and he found it breaking apart and crumbling in his hands. Some of the gods ~~xxx~~ suggested that this was an omen that man had better be left uncreated.

Why not be satisfied with the multitude of living creatures already in existence? But Prometheus refused to be frustrated. He looked up into the sky for signs of rain: there was not a cloud to be seen beneath the brazen vault of heaven. He searched the garden of creation for undiscovered wells and springs, the gods had dried them all up. Even the grass was beginning to be parched.

At last, Prometheus threw himself down ^{on} the ground and wept, and then, while his grief was still unspent, he saw that his tears had moistened the clay and that it held together. Swiftly, he molded it afresh, and before the sun went down he was ready to breathe the breath of his own life into the image he had fashioned; ^{OUT OF THE MIST OF DARKNESS} ~~and~~ thus ^{was} ~~was~~ man, ^{TEARS} the child of ~~desire and~~ sorrow, created.

The meaning of this myth is unmistakeable: in the composition of human life, tears are just as natural as laughter; the substance of sorrow has been in us from the beginning. You cannot have desire without heart-ache, or feel the poignancy of yearning without knowing the closeness of despair. There is no love, without its loss, no life without death.

We must accept this fact - accept it gladly, bravely. To fight it is to fight God and nature and to smash our heads against the rocks of the inevitable reaping a harvest of pain over and above what should be ours. ~~Sorrow~~^{So} Much of our anguish in bereavement is due to our inability to see this truth; our resentment and our fears are ~~founded~~^{after} on the belief that things might have turned out otherwise. Let us find solace in the knowledge that things must turn out as they have, for life means that eventually death must come and complete it; life simply may not be had on any other terms.

^{Yes,} We must learn to accept our sorrow - and yet ~~we~~^{though we accept it} must never surrender to it, this is the second demand of the hour of bereavement: not to plunge into ~~the~~ dark despair, not to yield to the obsession of sorrow, ~~not~~^{never} to live cloistered behind the gloomy walls of an ill-controlled grief.

^{a great many people who} There are people ^{who} turn their sorrow into a permanent melancholy until it becomes almost an emotional indulgence. Because they find themselves sometimes sorrow laden they insist upon being always so. Thus they are able to sever themselves from what needs to be done in the world. "It is all hopeless," they say, "quite hopeless!" And because they can say it is hopeless, they feel excused from trying to do anything about it. ~~They~~

~~Surrender~~

This is surrender. This is escape - and sorrow can be that, an escape from life. A person who succumbs to his grief often thinks that he is somehow a superior sort of person. He has faced the worst, he says, and is not deceived like other people. But he is deceived. He deceives himself. He has not faced the worst/ He has only glanced at it - and run away in complete retreat.

THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH IS A PLACE OF ULTIMATE DESPAIR ONLY FOR
~~Man must pass through the valley of the shadow of death; it is a place of ultimate~~
~~THOSE WHO STAY IN IT, NOT FOR THOSE WHO PASS THROUGH IT. ~~Those who~~ WHO WALK BEYOND,~~
destruction only for those who stay in it. There has to be an end to mourning. Why?

Because we must live. That is the most compelling argument man knows. We must live, live and work, live and carry on the ~~business~~^{work} of our lives.

This, it seems to me, is the final measure we can undertake in our struggle to overcome grief: to turn from feeling to doing, from the grave to the noise of the city, from the peace that rests upon the changed countenance of the dead to the keen struggles and quick doings of the living.

Each of us has a task in life - the scientist his search for truth, the mother her child, the poet his song, the ditch digger his ditch, and the merchant his business. Bereavement does not relieve us of these obligations. There is work to be done, there are duties to be met, promises to be kept. In short, there is a life which must be lived, for life, no matter what else it may do to us, ~~we~~ cannot take from us the task and duty which it itself imposes upon us. And it is in the performance of these duties that we can find the strength to face whatever life has to offer.

Of the courage which comes from one's duty done, I could give illustrations from some of mankind's greatest souls; but the most beautiful illustration I know is found in the simple Latin inscription left by a simple Roman woman who lived over 2000 years ago. Here is what she says: "Stranger I have only little to say. Stop and read. This is the grave of a not to beautiful woman. I loved my husband with all my heart. I gave birth to two sons. One I leave behind me alive, the other I buried in his youth. I served my household, I spun my wool, I tended my hearth. Dixi, Abi! I have spoken, you may depart."

What a wealth of quiet dignity in these simple words of a simple woman. This is living with courage. This is the secret of ~~the escape from~~ ^{what to do with} grief. Not illusion, not escape. but a fulfillment of one's task in life, as best as one may.

When grief takes a hold of our lives, ^{then} let us choose the path ^{from} of duty: let the mother tend her young, ~~and let~~ ^{let} the poet sing his song, the laborer dig his ditch and the merchant do his best. Let us do more than that, let us do our duty toward others, toward those less fortunate than we, for it is a strange and ~~warming~~ ^{confusing} thing to see how quickly our tears of self-pity dry when we ^{behold} ~~see~~ the tears of others.

Is not the path of duty also the finest way of honoring our loved ^{one} who are no more? The living have ^{an} ever larger claim upon us than the dead. Nay, the noblest tribute to the

dead is not the tribute of idle weeping, but the tribute of beneficent works. Hugging a tombstone is no way to remember the worth of the dead; the better way is to espouse fervently the cause of life.

Bearing our burdens therefore means three things: the acceptance of grief as the unavoidable substance of life, the refusal to surrender all of life to grief, and a return to the tasks and responsibilities of living.

May these thoughts give us comfort and support at this hour when we recall our dear departed, as we again open the wounds which time has barely healed. May they enable us to find the valley of the shadow of death not a place whose darkness and gloom will envelope us forever, but rather as a place ~~for~~ of temporary sojourn, a place we merely walk through.

And having walked through it with bated breath, perhaps, and with pain and grief, ^{may} we come to that which lies beyond, where there is light, the light of new hope, the light of new life.

Then will we be enabled to pray with the psalmist of old:

Adonoy Roi Lo Ehsor
There Lord is my shephard, I shall not want etc..

Memory of the past, reverence for things of the past is a leitmotif of our faith, a central theme in the symphony of noble thoughts and lofty ideals that is Judaism. The Jewish people were the very first to develop a sense of history, the awareness that past, present and future are more than just a succession of isolated events, but rather that they represent a stream of life originating from a single source and impelled by a single moti purpose. Judaism has always insisted on knowledge of the past - the Bible is, to a large extent, a book of history; and many of our rituals, particularly the ceremonies attendant upon our holidays (the Chanukkah candles, the Passover Seder, the Succoh of the Feast of Tabernacles) were designed and are to be observed as a means of keeping alive for our times the wondrous events of our past.

Shemini Atzeres, the festival we mark tonight, is such a holiday of history, commemorating the days when countless pilgrims flocked to the Temple on Mount Moriah to thank God for the blessings of the harvest. And a moment ago we recited the Yizkor service, the memorial prayers which recall a more immediate past, bringing to mind with loving tenderness things of the past, persons and places endeared by memory and affection.

The prayers and hymns of the Yizkor service express Judaism's ardent faith in the immortality of man. As we recite these prayers and ponder over their meaning, probing questions inexorable present themselves to us, demanding an answer: What happens to us after we die? Is there such a thing as life after death or is there only nothingness? And if there is a life after death, what kind of life will it be, will there be an actual physical resurrection or only an eternal wandering of the soul? These questions demand an answer, not only because we want consolation for the bereaved and an allaying of our own fears; these questions demand an answer, because the nature of that answer will determine to a great extent just how we are to live this life, our earthly life.

Man has always groped for knowledge of life after death, and the Jew was no exception. Throughout the generation, our greatest thinkers and dreamers ^{expended} ~~spent~~ their powers ^{on concentration} on this most perplexing theme, and a great many different answers were given: many insisted that there will be an actual physical resurrection - a time when the dry bones will be gathered together and covered with sinews and flesh and skin, when they will be filled again with the breath of life, and live; - we all recall how our parents would insist on having ~~expire~~ some grains of sand from the holy land under their coffins, orthodox cemeteries still have all graves facing the east, and the most devout of our ancestors would ~~make~~ ^{make a final trying} journey to the land of Israel in order to be buried there - all this a preparation for the day of physical resurrection ^{which it was thought to be} heralded by ~~the resurrection of~~ the Messiah ^{who is to make history} ~~who was thought to make~~ his first appearance in the holy land. The more mystical among Jewish thinkers ^{us} ~~gave~~ ^{went to their} vivid descriptions ^{how perfect in its details} of life after death - hell and its horrors for the sinner, and for the devout the bliss of heaven ^{where} ~~where~~ God held court surrounded by his faithful. The rationalists among us, affirmed ^{the concept} ~~a belief~~ in the immortality of the soul, ^{the belief} that though the body perish, the soul which gave it life, that spark which made of a piece of clay a living thinking breathing being, ^{will} ~~would~~ live forever more. But whatever the particular ^{person's} ~~opinion~~, whether rationalist or mystic, traditionalist or modernist, all Jewish thinkers shared one great belief, that there is an afterlife with God.

This profound conviction is based on the belief in the goodness of God. Other religions bind ~~their belief in~~ immortality to a miraculous event; Christianity sees the promise of ^{eternal life} ~~immortality~~ in the resurrection of Jesus. ~~Judaism~~ ^{Such} and Jews need no miracle; they believe in God, and hence they ^{also} believe in the immortality of man, for God who created man would not want him to perish entirely.

These two convictions ~~do~~ go hand in hand - the belief in God and the belief in immortality, one without the other is quite meaningless, and both are necessary if life is to have ^{any} ~~any~~ meaning. If there is no God, if we are only colloidal solutions compounded by chance, where do we get the capacity for kindness and the impulse to love and to create? And if there is no immortality, why should we bleed and struggle and sacrifice in order to ~~create~~ preserve these values? Would God ~~create~~ void ~~create~~ man only to have him perish and with it ~~lose~~ the value ~~which~~ man represents? This would be ^{senseless} as a human artist creating with perishable material - a great sculptor does not use sandstone to fashion things of beauty, he uses marble. If life is to have any meaning, there is a God, and if there is a God, there is immortal life for man and his soul - this is our firm conviction, our ardent faith, even though we may have to await the experience of death and what lies beyond it for the ultimate confirmation of our belief.

There are, of course, ~~some~~ kinds of immortality which we can confirm earthly through the experience of our ^{lives}. There is the immortality of memory and the ^{life} ~~immortality~~ of the human deed. Those who are gone are with us, we can almost sense their physical presence whenever we remember them. And their deeds are also everlasting, they are ~~not~~ interred with their bones. This is what we mean when, in our ~~memorial~~ memorial prayers we say of our dead that they "still live on earth in the acts of goodness they performed and in the hearts of those who cherish their memory."

The deeds of men are immortal. None of us leave life the same as we found it. All of us influence life for better or for worse, or rather for better and for worse, and after we are gone, the influence of our ^{life} ~~life~~ ^{will exist in the lives of generations to come} ~~will affect future generations both for good and for bad.~~

Look around you and see, see the war ~~here~~ scarred cities of many lands, see our own ill-planned communities and their slums, in them live the greed and the stupidity of the dead of earlier generations. Look at some of the social derelicts filling prisons and asylums, all living out in their wretched lives the immorality of parents long since dead. Look at the disease-ridden ward of hospitals, wards which could be empty would past generations ~~have~~ have spent as much effort in fashioning instruments of health and healing as they did in finding new, deadlier ways to kill and to destroy. Yes, our own incredible inhumanity and ferocity will live on in the crushing burden of death and destruction our wars have bequeathed to future generation.

Truly, the evil that men do lives after them, God doth visit the iniquities of the fathers upon the third ~~and~~ fourth generation. But the good that men do also lives after them - it also cannot be interred with their bones. We do not have to build society new each year, and though we have our share of slums and war-torn cities, we have also hospitals and schools and many institutions of human love reflecting and retaining the goodness of those who went before us. And just as our physical civilization lives ~~and~~ ^{and} breathes through the good in the lives of the past so does our spiritual civilization live and breath through the spirit of past teachers and thinkers, from Moses to Isayah, from Lincoln to Roosevelt. These ~~many~~ live immortal in their thoughts.

Perhaps this is the very lesson the Deuteronomist wanted to teach us when he pointed out in the Torah section read but a moment ago, that no one ^{really} knows the sepulchre of Moses, no one knows where Moses is buried. ~~perhaps he meant to say that~~ ^{one} cannot bury a Moses, one cannot confine him to the four walls of a grave. He lives on in the hearts of the people whose soul

is filled with his spirit. Note also, that we Jews have no Moses ~~day~~ worship and no Moses day in our festival calendar, but we do have a Simchas Torah, extolling the spiritual heritage of Moses which is eternal.

A similar thought is expressed in the ^{rich} literature of ancient Greece. When Socrates was condemned to death and was about to drink the poisoned cup, his friend Crito asked him how he wished to be buried. Socrates replied that insofar as the funeral formalities are concerned, his friends could do what they pleased, but he added, you cannot bury Socrates. ~~Men~~ might bury the body of Socrates, but ~~thy~~ can never enter the spirit which we still acclaim as Socrates.

True enough, it is not given to all of us to be as wise as a Socrates or as effective a leader as Moses, but each of us can accomplish something in life which will benefit future generations. The Talmud tells the familiar story of an old man who was seen planting a slow-bearing fruit tree ~~a~~ ^{beside} of road; when the passers by mocked him and told him that he would never live to eat the fruits of that tree he humbly answered: Al my life I have been eating the fruit of trees planted by those who lived long before me; should I not now plant a tree for those who come after me." It is not given to all of us to plant a mighty forest of sturdy trees. But each of us can at least plant a slender shoot which will bring shade and refreshment to our children.

We have thought carefully and probed diligently for knowledge of life after death. The weight of our tradition, bolstered by the insights of great men, gives us the assurance that there is an afterlife with God. ~~But~~ We accept this assurance with the prayer that our faith will find confirmation when we are called upon to take the lonely road to the hereafter.

In the meantime, may God give us the strength so to demean ourselves on earth, so that when our children will recite ~~their~~ ^{for us} Yiskor prayers they will be able to say of us, even as we say now of our parents: thy lovely words, thy lovely deeds, they are a blessing unto us.

Yizkor

My friends,

Once again we have reached this holiest of moments on this most holy Day.
Once again we ^{are} gathered in solemn assembly to recite the prayers of our Yizkor service. ^{And} ~~Once again~~ ^{Still another} we speak a farewell in memory to those who have been taken from us.

Each one of us at this hour remembers someone he has loved and lost:
a mother or father, a husband or wife, a child or a friend.

Some among us are opening older wounds, memories of a more distant past.
Others, alas too many, are still numbed by the anguish of recent bereavement.
But however great or small the sweep of time since their passing,
we still mourn... we still lament our loss...
for we still remember... remember the happiness that was ours when they were near,
the care they gave us in boundless measure, the love which sweetened our days.
Their image lives within us still, a silent secret of the soul...
and will remain with us forever.

No, we need no service of remembrance to remind us lest we forget...
We need no reminders, we remember too well...

Memories come

to interrupt our sleep

to still our laughter

to fill our silence with the voices of the past.

We are here not to be reminded, but to be consoled, to find healing ^{balm} for the wounds of heart.

Is there a balm for Gilead? Can we find our comfort? ^{Where is the} ~~Is there~~ source for ^{inner} ~~new~~ strength?

Perhaps we can find a measure of consolation in the knowledge of tragedy's universality, in the truth that we were not chosen ~~especially~~ for affliction in bereavement, but that we bear a destiny common to every man. We are all 'achim l'tsuroh' brothers in our agony, brothers in pain. Sooner or later we all must face the death of our loved ones; and sooner or later we too will hear the summons which comes from the unknown beyond.

It is a summons which is undeniable. No man, however mighty, can escape its call. We may think that we are strong and durable. We may boast of our power, we may glory in our ~~wealth~~ ^{might}. But when the truth is seen and told, we are as frail and as perishable as the succah which we will enter next week our strength is no stronger than the strength of this booth thrown together in haphazard fashion:

a few sticks in the ground

an improvised wall or two

a leaking roof

no shelter at all against the gusts of autumn

only a temporary dwelling erected for use during seven days...

or is it seven decades... We are that booth, fragile and lacking in power.

The reminder of man's common destiny may not hearten us. But it ~~may~~ ^{will} serve to help us overcome at least a measure of our mourning.

For you see so very much of our ~~mourning~~ anguish in bereavement is rooted in resentment, in the somewhat self-centered belief that we were singled out for sorrow.

Or else our anguish grows out of remorse

out of the wistful thought that things might have ~~turned out~~ ^{been} otherwise had only we dealt otherwise.

Let us take solace in the knowledge that things must turn out as they have for life means that death must come and complete it.

Life simply cannot be had on any other terms...

There is ~~another~~^{several} source of strength in the hour of bereavement.

It is the voice of duty, the voice which calls us

from the thoughts of the past to the demands of the present

from the silence of the grave to the tasks and responsibilities of life.

Each of us has his task in life

the preacher his pulpit

the doctor his patients

the mother her children

the father his profession

the poet his songs

Bereavement does not relieve us of these obligations. There is work to be done...
there are duties to be met...there are promises to be kept...

In a word, there is a life which must be lived, for life - whatever else it
may do to us - it cannot take from us the tasks which it itself imposes upon us
and it is in the determined fulfillment of these tasks that we may well find the
strength and courage to continue life.

The pathway of duty also is surely the finest way of honoring our dead.

Hugging a tombstone is no way to remember their worth

We do not honor them by weeping

We do not honor them by wailing

we do not hallow their memories by watering their graves with our tears

We honor them best when we live as they desire

when we cherish causes they embraced

when we love the living whom they loved in life.

There is still another thought which can give us comfort in the hour of bereavement

It is the thought of God. It is our faith in His goodness. It is our conviction that He who creates life will not abandon those we love to the eternal midnight of the Tomb.

Even as we think of our dead, the sense of their continued presence is stronger than the knowledge of their death

the words they spoke

the joy they offered

the love they gave in life

these will warm and sustain us always

For these precious endowments were never bound to their bodily frame

to the fibres of their muscles,

to the marrow of their bones

they came from a spirit within them and beyond them

and this spirit lives on, for everlasting blessing.

The belief in immortality is our soul's invincible surmise.

In the hour of despair and desolation

when our fondest hopes are shattered

and we speak to unresponsive clay and weep over motionless form

This thought alone can ease the bitterness of our grief.

The hope for life eternal shines brightest in our darkest night.

It is in the desert of our affliction that we behold its radiant flame.

Through these healing balms can sorrowing man attain his peace

By accepting sorrow as the inevitable in gradient of life, and death as its inevitable ~~end~~ end; by making a determined effort to turn from the grave to

life, heeding its call to duty; and by crowning all these with faith in God

WITH THE CONVICTION THAT HE WHO PLACED MAN UPON EARTH
AND GAVE HIM A MIND TO SEEK TRUTH + A HEART TO SEE BEAUTY
WILL NOT CRUSH IT ALL FOREVER.

May these thoughts give us comfort as we prepare to recall our loved ones
who have reached their horizon and are gone out of sight

May they enable us to find the valee of the shadow of death not a place of *per*
whose gloom and whose darkness will envelop us forever

but rather a place of temporary sojourn, a place we merely walk through.

And having walked through it, with bated breath perhaps, and surely not without
~~tears~~ *tears*, may we come to that which lies beyond, where there is the light

the light of new hope

the light of new life.



1958
Yom Kippur Sermon

Once again, by the grace of God, we have reached this holiest moment of the Jewish Year - Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. Once again we stand before the throne of the Most High and pray in the words of our teacher Moses: "כְּסוּ עֲוֹנוֹתָם לִי יְהוָה - Pardon, I beseech Thee, the iniquity of this people, as Thou hast pardoned this people from Egypt even until now." And once again we are anxious to hear the divine response: "וְאָמַר יְהוָה 'כִּי יִשְׁמַע יְהוָה' And the Lord said, I have forgiven according to thy word."

At this hour, so sacred unto Israel, the preacher feels that only the noblest ideas, Judaism's highest principles, should be proclaimed and propounded from this pulpit. We take as our text, therefore, those familiar words from the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy ^{words} which constitute the central dictum of our faith:

"שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה יְהוָה
"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord
is One."

These words enshrine Judaism's greatest contribution to the making of mankind's mind. They constitute the supreme confession of faith in the religion of the synagogue declaring that the Holy God worshipped and proclaimed by Israel is One, that He alone is God who was and is and ever will be.

The Shema rightly occupies a central place in Jewish religious thought, for every other Jewish belief turns upon it. All goes back to it. All flows from it. Implicit in this sublime pronouncement is a declaration of war against all the "isms" of religion, against polytheism and dualism and pantheism, and against the belief in a trinity. The

Shema affirms that there is no intermediary between man and G^d, that prayer is to be directed to God alone and to no other being ^{to} in the heavens above or on the earth beneath. Implicit in the Shema also is the Jewish affirmation of the brotherhood of man as well as Jewish Messianic expectation of a Kingdom of God on earth. ^{For} If God is one, then he must be the father of all mankind, which means, by logical necessity, that all ^{beings} human are brothers and owe each other the obligations and the love of brotherhood. And since God is One for all the universe then the day must inevitable come when all men will recognize him as such and proclaim Him as the one supreme deity. Then there will be no more man made wars nor man made poverty, but every man will sit under his vine and under his fig tree and none shall make him afraid.

Fully conscious of the spiritual wonders enshrined in the Shema, the rabbis made certain that its truths ^{would saturate} to the highest and the humblest in Israel. They assigned the Shema a central place in the liturgy of the Jew. They ordered that it be recited at least three times a day. They made the Shema a part of the Torah service. They included it in the Kedusha. They ordered it as the final prayer ~~terminating~~ concluding the Neilah service, culminating worship on the Day of Atonement. And they ordained that the six words of the Shema be uttered in man's final hour when he is preparing to meet his heavenly master face to face.

The pedagogical efforts of the rabbis bore rich fruit. The Shema became the Jew's supreme confession of faith. The first prayer of innocent childhood and the last utterance of the dying, it became the rallying cry by which a hundred generations in Israel were welded together into one great brotherhood to do the will of their father in heaven. And it became the watch-word of myriads of Jewish martyrs who agonized for the Unity and died - died with "Shema Yisrael" on their lips.

Today and alas, many Jews, especially in this country, have lost some of the enthusiasm for this prayer, at least they seem to have lost passion for some of the ideals the Shema's history evokes: a willingness to sacrifice for religion, a steadfast devotion, the pride in faith that everlastingly proclaims: I am a Jew, and proud of it.

Of course there is some justification for this decline in spirit. No more than a decade ago, six million Jews were killed, ~~slaughtered~~ butchered, not in ~~the~~ wilds of Africa, no amongst primitive peoples, but in the heart and center of European and Christian civilization. And the slaughter was engineered by a people that ^{once} stood in the van of progress, whose poets were world figures, whose universities were ~~xxx~~ Mecca for seekers after truth and the symphonies of whose composers are still played wherever orchestras assemble. Knowing that Americans sprang from the same stock as did the peoples of Europe, American Jews wonder and fear whether the same passions and hostilities aroused there could not be evoked here. To avert this there are some in our midst who suggest that Jews be seen and heard as little as possible. They are overwhelmed by the fact that the Jews are a minority and being so must seek the good will of the majority, cater to its whims and accept its prejudices. But, on this Atonement Day, standing before a throng of silent worshippers and reciting the Shema, I recall the millions upon millions of Jewish martyrs who died for their faith, I recall particularly the thousands upon thousand of Jewish young men who gave themselves for America in many a war for freedom, and I think I hear their blood cry out to us in protest saying that they did not die that we here living in a land of freedom should elect for ourselves a status of inferiority and should minimize our Jewishness in order to gain the good graces of the majority.

It might be noted, marginally, that this attitude is shared by half a million Jewish War Veterans, all of us who served in the armed forces, who, ~~in the~~ on the ~~armed services had minority status~~ front lines and under fire had no minority status and who in civilian walks of life want to enjoy the same rights and privileges as our non-Jewish comrades at arms.

First things first. On the matter of this our minority status, by American principle, we are no such thing. There are five million Jews in the United States. There are scores of religious denominations numerically smaller than Jews, and yet these are not considered members of minority groups. There are fewer Episcopalians, Evangelicals, Disciples, Unitarians, Seventh Day Adventists United Lutherans and Universalists than there are Jews on the American Scene. If Episcopalians are not members of a minority group, then neither are Jews. All members of religious groups in America are members of minority religion, for no denomination has a majority in our country. Nor are we hyphenated American. We are American. The term American refers to citizenship and nationality alone and is silent about religious conviction. As American we are certainly no minority. Our minority status then is pretty much a figment of our imagination. Like the proverbial age, we are what we feel, and too many of us want to feel like a minority, and what all of us to act like one and be overwhelmed by that thought.

Now this status of inferiority is suggested to us in the interest of good public relations. For instance, to be identified with cause about which the American people is divided must be avoided at all cost for it will serve to channel the wrath of the opposition against us. For this reasons Jews should be the leading conformists on the American scene - and this despite the heroic and magnificent record of non-comforty of our ancestors throughout the ages.

It has been assumed in some quarters that good public relations ~~could~~ for Jews could be developed by utilizing pretty much the same methods employed by

business concerns in an attempt to sell tooth paste or gasoline. Well, we Jews aren't tooth paste or gasoline. Business firms ^{Cultivate the friendship of the public in order} ~~want~~ to sell their products;

As such they are unconcerned about spiritual principles. But Judaism is, is very much concerned about spiritual principles. Judaism's task is not to win favor for Jews but to win public acceptance of its noble teachings. Judaism seeks first the applause of God and the commendation of history. It cannot compromise on its basic principles for the sake of good public relations. If, centuries ago, our ancestors had consulted public relations experts they would have been told that they could win good will, by the abandonment of their religious heritage, of their faith in God, of their adherence to the second commandment which states that thou shalt have no other God before me. Our ancestors did not relish living in ghettos, being exiled periodically, ~~having~~^{seeing} their sons and daughters burned at the stake. But they refused to buy good public relations at the expense of their religious conviction, for them they ~~lives~~ lived, and, if need be, for them they died.

This is not to say that we should not be eager upon achieving perfect understanding between Jews and Christians. But if, in order to have that understanding we must cease to be Jews, we must do that which makes for a minimizing of our Jewishness, then we simply have to do without such understanding.

But of course, we don't have to minimize our Jewishness in order to gain the respect of the non Jew. It is time ~~that~~ we learn this truth, the truth that the best public relations for Jews here in America can be achieved through Judaism. That the best good will publication for Jews here in America is the Bible. That the best way of winning the applause of the American community is be regularly filling the shrine dedicated to the worship of ~~Jesus~~^{the One God} and by maintaining and upholding Judaism, that Judaism which has fashioned civilizations, that Judaism which produced the authors of the old and the new testament, that Judaism which gave birth to the synagogue, the church the mosque, etc. That Judaism has won the applause of history.

If we are true to our task we shall live to further great convictions about One God and one humanity, about the equality of all races and all nations and all degrees of education in the sight of God and in the sight of man. To this we must tes-

tify today in the American scene. Away then with the council of timidity! Away with the caution of cowardice! Away with those who would flatter themselves into the good graces of the powerful. Away with those who have no principles? Away with those who beg for good will and toady for favor. Who are we? We are American with our roots deep in American soil. Children of a faith whose correligionists were with Columbus when he discovered America; whose sons were with Washington at Valley Forge; who wore the uniforms of the blue and the gray; who died at Belleau Woods, at Guadalcanal, on the beaches of Sicily and on the plains of France. And who, at this very moment are rotting in the putrid camps of North Korea.

We are American. We elect to be Jews. We reject, must utterly reject, the suggestion of protective minority mimicry. We shall stand for the right as God gives us to see the right. Stand for it when it ~~is~~ is popular and pray for the strength to stand for it when it is not. We shall champion the brotherhood of all races whether a public referendum on the subject would endorse or reject it. .

We are not chameleons who constantly change color to suit majority opinion. We hold great truths and champion great principles. We shall exercise our full fledged right as American citizens with the boldness of conviction, the courage of truth, and the heroism of soldiers on the field of battle.

Have I been too vehement, too outspoken? Should I have spoken more gently? But on this Yom Kippur day I remember the millions upon millions of Jewish martyrs, I remember the thousands upon thousands of Jews who died for America. I remember particularly my own good friend, Bill Levy who was torn to shreds at my side in Italy. They did not die that we here in this land of freedom should be hesitant about our Jewishness. If we are timid, because of fear of ill will about exercising these rights, then they died in vain. If we exercise them to practice and proclaim the faith in one God and in ^O_ne humanity, then we vindicate their heroism and they sleep in peace.

strength. Grant us O God the strength

We pray then this day for God's gift of ~~wisdom and strength~~ and wisdom ~~to~~ to seek and obtain the understanding and favor of the world, not for ourselves as chameleons, but for ourselves as Jews, Jews proud of our faith, happy to affirm with full firm voice and everlastingly the clarion call of Israel's Ages: Shema Yisroel Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echod. Hear O Israel, the Lord our God the Lord is One.