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12

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6

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## "AMERICAN JEWS AND ISRAEL"

Sermon for Rosh Hashanah morning, October 4, 1948

When we gathered for prayer last evening, the New Year was in the process of being born, and we sat through the mysterious dark hours of the night and waited for its birth. Today in the fresh bright light of morning, we stand on the threshold of another twelve month period, the 5709th according to the reckoning of our ancestors, during which man has struggled slowly up the ladder of progress. Today we are permitted to look back over the course of the previous year to see what has been done.

Many things have occurred since we met last on Rosh Hashanah a year ago. Our own Congregation and Community <sup>have</sup> ~~has~~ grown in size. Our Temple, in its continued expansion, continues to reflect the growth of Judaism which is noticable on a national scale across the country. New congregations are being formed, new hospitals are being built, new community centers are being established, and those in the leadership of Jewish community work seem to sense an ever increasing pulse beat of interest and enthusiasm concerning the propagation of Jewish values.

But of all the events which occurred in the Jewish world during the past year, the most far reaching and the most world shaking was the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel on the 14th of May 1948, 5 Iyar 5708. This event far outstrips anything which has occurred in Jewish history in many hundreds of years. Its implications are tremendous, its potentialities enormous, its real meaning may not be clear to us for many years or even decades to come. It might therefore appear premature to discuss this event today, and yet I have the feeling that it is uppermost in everyone's mind. All of us, those who supported it avidly, those who worked for it with every ounce of effort and conscientiousness, as well as those who were perhaps less enthusiastic about it, are wondering what will be its effect upon us, the Jews of the world who will continue to



live outside of Israel. Each of us, I think, is wondering about definitions, relationships, influences, and inter-actions, which are sure to occur in the future. And so, realizing that perhaps our historical sense is still foreshortened and incomplete, it is perhaps most fitting on this Rosh Hashanah, to attempt to analyze the whole problem of American Jews and Israel. If the developments of history in the future shall prove our present analysis to be incomplete, I fear that is to be expected. At any rate, review we must and analyze we shall attempt, in an effort to set out thinking along the lines of understanding what it now means to American Jews to have the Jewish State established. Rabbis all over the land are discussing this same theme this morning.

There are four distinct historical periods leading up to the formation of the Jewish State. You all recall that last summer the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, abbreviated as UNSCOP, consisting of representatives of 11 nations of the world appointed by the General Assembly, made a long and exhaustive survey of the Palestine question. UNSCOP listened to all sides of the problem, made on-the-spot surveys and investigations, gathered a tremendous amount of testimony, and finally wrote two reports. The majority report recommended that Palestine be partitioned into two separate States, politically independent, yet joined together by a custom's union which would make the economy of the country sound and stable. The minority report called for the establishment of a unitary State with both Arabs and Jews operating together in one Federal Government. Next, both of these reports were presented to the General Assembly, which thrashed them over, discussed and debated them and finally after weeks of the most exhaustive kind of public discussion, reported in the press of the entire world, the General Assembly took a vote which indicated that the majority plan was approved and that the territory of Palestine was to be partitioned into two separate states. This decision occurred on the famous day of the 29th day of November, 1947, almost



a year ago.

Phase three started within 48 hours after the partition decision made at Lake Success. The Arabs, in a loose federation of guerrilla armies, waged an attack upon the Jewish part of Palestine. It was war without being called war, and all of the resources of the Palestinian Jews had to be mobilized to meet the onslaught. Fighting raged, villages were burned, people were killed, and there was no peace in the Holy Land. The United Nations called a truce, which lasted for 28 days, during which an attempt was made to settle the Arab intransigence without further bloodshed. But this was impossible. The Arab States individually and collectively refused to abide by the decision of the United Nations and war broke out again, this time with more fury and ferocity than even before. During the long months of this past winter, through January, February, March, fighting continued at an unparalleled rate and many thousands of casualties accumulated. Efforts were made by the Israeli Government to negotiate directly and indirectly with various Arab States, and these negotiations were all aborted by the refusal of any Arab power to consider peace. Finally, in desperation, the UN mustered its maximum force and ordered both nations to lay down their arms, appointing a mediator to arbitrate between them.

On the 14th of May, just a few months ago, a group of courageous men met in Tel Aviv and electrified the world by announcing the establishment of the State of Israel. The 15th of May, the day on which the British administration was due to cease operation, was the Jewish Sabbath, and with a wonderful demonstration of respect for tradition, the authorities announced the establishment of their government one day in advance, in order not to desecrate the Sabbath. Since the 14th day of May, the government of Israel, under the leadership of its prime minister, David Ben Gurion, has attempted to observe the uneasy truce, while Count Bernadotte, the UN mediator, sought to bring peace to the ravished land. He died in the



course of duty, brutally murdered by a group of insane fanatics. There was no excuse for the action of the Stern gang, and the government quickly adopted direct and forthright measures, aimed at uprooting the gang and arresting its leaders. <sup>FRIEDMAN-YELIN IN JAIL NOW.</sup> Bernadotte's report was presented to the United Nations one day before he was assassinated, and that report is currently being discussed in Paris now. It does not appear likely that his report, sanctified as it is by his act of sacrifice, will provide the base for healthy negotiations in the future, since one of its provisions is that the Negev area, the desert land in the south, be transferred to the Arabs. This is totally unacceptable to the Jews, since it is exactly that land which is being planned as the base for future expansion and absorption of immigrants coming from Europe. Furthermore that area was included in the UN partition plan, and therefore the Israeli government feels it has a legal base for retaining its claim to it. At any rate, the Bernadotte plan is currently being discussed at the United Nations and it is impossible <sup>right now</sup> to predict what future recommendations will be made.

This is the history of what has occurred. It is a history of international conferences and investigations, of discussions around the table of nations with decisions being weighed very carefully, a history of war and bloodshed, and now a history of absorption of the remnants of European Jewry who after years of dreaming and hoping and hungry planning, are at last coming home. Sixty thousand displaced persons have entered Israel between January and September of this year. This figure includes those months of the war when it was very difficult to take new people in. Yet miracles were done, colonies were founded, new settlements opened, and homes provided for the homeless. Now that this has been done, what is our attitude toward it? What will be our future connection with it? How are we expected as American Jews to act in relation to the new State of Israel?



These are the questions which plague all of us, and these are the questions which demand an answer.

There is as yet no major clear cut policy statement from any single authoritative source. We have several clues however which can give us guidance. The Central Conference of American Reform Rabbis, which met this past June, after the State had been formally established, unanimously adopted this statement of principle, written in its President's report. I should like to quote one paragraph of the President, Rabbi Abraham Feldman. He said: "It seems to me that in the presence of the fait accompli, the half century of debate on the subject of Zionism should now come to an end. After all, the government of the State of Israel is not your government or mine. The democracy of Israel in Eretz Israel will forge its own political destiny. We shall help them where and when we can, and rightly so. They will have our prayers, our ardent wishes for wisdom and understanding, for skillful and noble statesmanship, for the blessing of God upon their will to righteousness and their architecture of justice. They will have our aid whilst they need aid, and our brotherly support as they require it. But the political controversy amongst us here should now be adjourned! We have been, we are, we shall remain, Americans. As Americans, we shall continue to give to our beloved United States the same full measure of devotion we have ever given it. As American Jews we shall continue to build our Jewish life here and jointly with our neighbors of every faith, God willing, we shall make our contribution as Jews and Americans to the spiritualization of life in this country, to the preservation of American democracy, to the establishment of justice and righteousness, peace and security for us and our children and our children's children, and all the children of men."

As can be seen, Rabbi Feldman, President of the conference who uttered these words which were approved unanimously, suggests an end now to all previous controversy over the question of the establishment of a Jewish



State. This then is the first clear-cut new definition or new conclusion which the events of May 14th indicate to us. The State is established, it is accepted de facto and de jure by many of the nations of the world, and any future bickering about its existence among ourselves is fruitless and senseless.

The second clue as to how we should act in relation to the new State is to be seen in the course of the recent discussions of the World Zionist Executive which met in Jerusalem during August. There a long involved series of meetings took place during which differences of opinion were resolved, some of them in friendly fashion, and some with bitterness. The question which was at the center of the whole debate was this: Shall members of the cabinet of Israel, who have been for many years members of the Executive of the World Zionist Organization, continue to act in that double role; or, now that the State has been established, should its officers and cabinet members be excluded from holding positions in the World Zionist Organization? The implications of this controversy are clear. The World Zionist Organization will continue to be an institution which will render aid and succor and comfort and assistance to the infant State of Israel, which will continue to require as much aid as possible for many years to come. The World Zionist Organization is composed of interested, devoted, loyal friends of Israel, Jews living in all countries of the world, outside of Israel. It was decided that members of the Israeli cabinet, as officers of one government, could not, with propriety, serve on a World Zionist Organization which is composed of Jews outside who are attempting to help them. The reason for this decision was that a political gulf now separates Jews of the government of Israel and Jew living elsewhere. It was most strongly felt that the World Zionist Organization should not be influenced by any of the cabinet members of the State of Israel. The separation between Jews living in other countries of the world who want to help Palestine, and the Jews living in Palestine who have now



formed their own government, must be kept clear and rigid. We can give them all the help they need, which we most certainly will have to do, but we must not confuse assistance and aid from the outside with the other problem of political identification. It is most encouraging to me that the separation of the World Zionist Executive from the Israeli officialdom should have occurred, for I think it makes clear the intention of Jewish leaders to effectuate a distinct separation. Parenthetically, may I say that I am sorry that Dr. Abba Hillel Silver was as ruthless as he was during the deliberations. It has always been my opinion that he is dictatorial and I hope he shall be curbed somehow, but that is a problem for the future. Meanwhile, the separation has taken place which is all to the good.

There is a third clue, as it were, which I would offer, as an indication of the thinking of Israeli leaders. I would quote to you the short but significant words of Dr. Chaim Weitzman, President of the State of Israel who made the following statement concerning the relationship between Israel and American Jews. He was asked by Mr. Bartley Crum, editor of a New York newspaper, and a great friend of the Jewish people, what he thought the future relationship would be. His answer was very simple. He said: "It is a clear-cut matter. The citizens of Israel are Israelis; the citizens of the United States are Americans. A parallel is that between an American of Irish decent and the land of Ireland. This is a perfectly normal relationship. He has sympathy for Ireland. He follows Ireland's fortunes with interest. He welcomes visitors to Ireland. He helps Ireland in many ways but he remains a citizen of America. It will be the same way with the Jews". In my opinion this statement is tremendously significant. It seems to me that ~~no~~ one is more authoritatively qualified to speak than the President of the State of Israel himself. He said in unequivocal terms that there could be no confusing of Jews outside of Israel with Jews inside of Israel. The one group will continue to be what it has always



been, namely citizens of the various lands in which it lives. While the other group, has organized a governmental structure for itself and will become citizens of the government under whose flag it lives. Any doubt or fear or confusion in the minds of American Jews about double loyalties should thus evaporate.

Rather than simply saying these words, however, let me give you a concrete case in point. You all remember very well the events just a few weeks ago when Count Bernadotte was assassinated. A wave of horror swept through the entire world. Jewish and non-Jewish alike. It was an inexcusable act of brutal assassination. Many Jews were fearful during those first hours following the news that there would be a wave of re-purcussion which would, to say the least, make life uncomfortable for us. Within the next 72 hours, however, it became quickly apparent that in no one's mind was there any association or any transference of guilt beyond the confines of the little band of idiotic fanatics who performed this act. All of the newspaper editorials, all of the public commentators, all of the people who formulate opinion in America, reiterated the same theme: The government of Israel might be held responsible, but certainly not the Jews of the world. And with a great relaxation after three or four days of worry and anguish, the Jews of America and England and Africa and Europe breathed a sigh of relief, since it became apparent that in the eyes of the world there was to be no generalization of the guilt, but that it would remain particularized to its perpetrators. This speaks louder than any words. It indicates that in the mind of the average non-Jew, there is this distinction between what happens in Israel and what happens with Jews over the rest of the world. A second proof which I would offer you is the recent survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at Denver University. This survey attempted to determine the facts as to whether any large scale anti-Semitism had been created as a result of the war and the acts of violence in the Holy Land during the past period of months. It



was perfectly clear in terms of this survey that there has been no adverse feeling created among the gentiles of America by the creation of the Jewish state." The results of this survey will be publicized with the specific purpose of allaying any doubts or fears on the part of American Jews.

No, I think we can say with a great deal of certainty and security that the establishment of the State of Israel, will not endanger the position of Jews elsewhere in the world, but quite the contrary it will enhance their prestige. All of you know that there has been a wave of admiration and respect for the manner in which the young men and women of Israel have fought for their rights. All of you know that there has been a tremendous sympathetic reaction on the part of non-Jews and Jews alike for the manner in which the Israeli army has held its own, fought for its principles, and established a state on a basis of social justice. For the first time in our history, people are saying - "Those Jews are not parasites. Those Jews are not merely city dwellers who live upon the work of other men's sweat. Those Jews can fight for their own rights and stand upon their own dignity". Newspaper editorials all over the country have stressed that theme, and Jews all over the country have swelled their chests in pride with the realization that their own dignity, their own self respect has been immeasurably enhanced by the brave and courageous action of the Jews of Israel.

Thus, the repercussions have been far from negative. On the contrary they have been very positive and very favorable. American Jews have benefitted from, not suffered from the tremendously inspiring courage of Palestinean Jews. And I think this process will continue. I think as the State of Israel becomes one of the family of nations, develops its own sound economy, makes its influence felt in terms of social progress in the whole world, we shall continue to draw more and more respect, prestige and dignity from that government. As it sends its ambassadors around the world, as it makes trade relations with other



countries, as it creates cultural contributions which will become the property of the entire civilized world, as it grows and matures and develops in the very fine way which is now foreshadowed, we shall grow happier with it, we shall become more delighted with it, we shall be held in respect because of what our brethern are doing there.

May I close by reminding you of the theory advanced by one of the great Zionist philosophers of half a century ago, Achad Ha-am by name. Achad Ha-am was one of the group of intellectuals whose center was in Odessa and who later moved to Palestine. He was a contemporary of Bialik of Tchernikowsky, and of other great giants in the Jewish intellectual renaissance at the end of the last century. Achad Ha-am called himself a Spiritual Zionist and coined a phrase which I think will turn out to be the finest description of the relationship between Israel and Jews in the rest of the world. He coined the phrase Merkaz Ruchani which means spiritual center. He conceived of a reborn state in Palestine as being a spiritual center from which would emanate rays of influence throughout the entire Jewish world. There would be no political connection between the Jews of Eretz Israel and the Jews of the Diaspora, but there <sup>would</sup> ~~will~~ be a spiritual affinity. We here would benefit from the growth of culture there. We would bask in the sunshine of its art, its music, its literature, its great creative genius. We would be enhanced wherever we lived by what was born and developed there. From this spiritual center would go forth Nitzutzim or sparks which would give light and warmth to our Jewish lives in America, in France, in England and elsewhere. We in turn would be connected spiritually with that center through our interest in it, our affection for it, and our desire to help it. The concept of Israel as the spiritual center of Judaism is a concept which is in the finest and highest tradition of Isaiah and the other prophets of bygone ages. <sup>for out of</sup> ~~From~~ Zion shall go forth the law, and the <sup>word</sup> ~~light~~ of the Lord from Jerusalem." Is. 2:3



When peace comes to that land, when one or two or three decades of absorption of refugees is completed, when new institutions and new talent can be born and flourish there, then I think we shall some day see the real meaning of this conception of Israel as the spiritual center for Judaism. In the meanwhile, without fear of jeopardizing our loyalties to the lands in which we live, Jews in America and all over the rest of the world, will continue to help strengthen and support the infant state. The Jews of Israel and the Jews of America, the two largest communities of Jewish people left in the world today, the two centers of important Jewish strength and hope for the future, will, side by side, go forward into a bright and shining new period of Jewish history. Complementing each other, abetting each other, influencing each other, yet with no political connection between them, these two centers, one the spiritual and the other the great reservoir of economic strength, will guarantee for our religion and for our people a finer era in the future than we have been privileged to witness in the past two millennia. May the will of God prevail and may these, our fondest and sincere wishes truly come to pass.

Amen



"O GOD, HEAR OUR PRAYER"

Rosh Hashanah Sermon, Sunday Evening, Oct. 3, 1948

Tonight is a night of birth. Tonight out of the travail and anguish, out of the tears and bloodshed, out of the hope and yearning and aspiration of the year just finished, there will be born another year during which mankind will continue its fight for survival and for progress. In this night of birth, we walk the corridors of time and history, waiting for the new era to be born, during which perhaps there shall be more laughter and less pain, more joy and less sorrow. As this night wears on, going through the long, dark hours, reaching slowly toward the rosy fingers of the dawn, we Jews cry out, as all men do when birth occurs, "O God hear our prayer - hear our voice".

Men are afraid of birth. We do not understand how it occurs. Out of nothing comes a new life, and because we do not understand it, because we cannot fathom the great mystery behind it, we are awed by it. While woman lies torn by the agony of creation, man walks his lonesome fearful way waiting for the birth to appear, and while he waits and while he fears, his thoughts turn to the mystery. He prays with all the desperate yearning of his deepest wishes, "O God may my child be born safely; may my child be born well; may my child come into life sound and whole."

So too, do we Jews on this night of the birth of the New Year stand before its Creator, and cry to Him with a deepness of feeling and a sincerity of purpose which perhaps we feel at no other time, begging Him to give us a year of happiness, to give us a year of goodness, to give us a year of peace and safety. The prayer which we have just finished reading at the end of the service, the prayer called, Ovinu Malkenu, begins with these words of terrible urgency and great outcry "Ovinu Malkenu, Shma Kolenu, Our Father, Our King hear our voice, hear our voice". "We would pray unto Thee because we need Thee, because we are



afraid to stand alone without Thee."

~~fore~~ I wonder sometimes why it is that human beings pray to God only when life is being born or when life is dying - why they pray only when they have some sense of fear or some sense of deep compulsive urgency, which forces them down to their knees almost against their will. I often ask myself the question - why do men not pray out of joy or happiness? Why do they not pray in order to help ennoble their thoughts or to purify their desires, or to make themselves better people? The great religious philosopher, William James, said this: "We hear in these days of scientific enlightenment a great deal of discussion about the efficacy of prayer; and many reasons are given us why we should not pray, while others are given us why we should. But in all this discussion very little is said of the reason why we do pray. The reason why we do pray is simply that we cannot help praying." We cannot help praying, said this philosopher, because the urgency and necessity of coming close to whatever it is we consider our God is one of the basic impulses of men, which we cannot deny. Abraham Lincoln, who, as we all know, was a deeply spiritual man, said the same thing in these words: "I have been driven many times to my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had no where else to go; my own wisdom and that of all men around me seemed insufficient for the day." Lincoln, faced in his life with many terrible and tragic decisions which had to be made, sought his refuge, his comfort in the one source which was greater than the combined intelligence of all the advisors with whom he was surrounded. He felt that he was literally driven to his knees because he had no where else to go.

In the play "The Tempest", when the storm broke and unleashed its whole fury of destruction, Shakespeare, who knew human nature as few other men have known it, spoke through the sailors on the vessel, and cried: "All lost! to prayers! to prayers! all lost!" Here men driven and



tossed on the surface of the sea by great winds and uncontrollable waves, faced a situation over which they had no possible measure of control, faced death itself, cried out from the bitterest anguish of their hearts "All lost! All lost!" There was no other refuge than prayers.

What Lincoln and James and Shakespeare all recognized was that when man is in his hour of need, when man has tried his best to solve the difficulty of that hour, when man has utilized all resource, craft and cunning, all intelligence and will, when he has done all this and still is overwhelmed by fear, he turns to that last refuge which he knows intuitively is the source from whence his final help must come.

I do not think that anyone can find fault with the fact that man turns to God in need. It seems to me that at that moment man does not require a temple in which to worship, nor music to provide a background for his mood, nor great and majestic words of the prayerbook which have been written by others long since gone, but that at that moment he cries out of his sweat and his pain - "O God please help me." Such prayer is genuine. Such prayer comes out of a depth of feeling unparalleled in other experiences of life. Such prayer rings true because it expresses the need of a child of God, and carries with it a message from one man's heart.

When we are afraid, when we stand appalled before great catastrophe of flood or fire or war, when thunder crashes about us and lives fall like twigs under a hail of fire and steel, then we shout "O God give us courage to live under this"; then the urgency is so deep, the sense of necessity is so genuine, that the prayer pierces the heart of any hearer. There are moments when we are lonely, when a lonesome man walks his room bereft of friend or companion, and feels himself so strangled, so shut out, so closed off from all life around him that he cries "O God give me a friend give me someone who can listen to me!" This prayer has meaning.



Many times you and I have been sick and afraid and lonely, and in those dark hours, we have prayed and prayed well. But, I would remind you of one thing. God is not the proprietor of a heavenly department store with whom we can bargain, from whom we can buy things. Prayers in which we request help, while they may be genuine, imply a relationship where we ask and God gives, or where we would buy from Him, with promises of loyalty and fidelity, His attention and His help. There is an old legend that the Cohen Godol, the high priest, used to offer a prayer to God once a year begging Him to ignore the pleadings of the tourists who traveled through the land of Palestine. These tourists always wanted good weather for their travel and so they prayed for sunshine, fair wind and no rain. The high priest would ask that these supplications be ignored because rain was necessary for the crops of the land. Very often when we pray for something we want, it involves our own personal good, but some one else's harm. This selfish type of prayer, the most common uttered by man, is the least valid of all prayer. We shouldn't make bargains with God.

There are some lines of comedy in the play "Life with Father", which deal with prayer. Father, as you will recall, was a man of tremendous temper. His son once said of him: "Father expected a good deal of God. He didn't actually accuse God of inefficiency, but when he prayed, his tone was loud and angry, like that of a dissatisfied guest in a carelessly managed hotel" Haven't we all been guilty of praying in that fashion? We never turn to God until we need something, and then we turn to him in a demanding and peremptory tone, as if He is expected to cater to our every whim.

I would suggest here, in addition to prayer of need, and instead of selfish prayer, that we also learn prayers of joy, of thanks, of self-inspiration, of purifying our thoughts and ennobling our desires: That we learn to utter these with the same genuine deep urgency which permeates our supplications of request. It might be difficult to pray, except when



in need. Doubts might arise the words might not come. Let us try the harder to overcome these skeptical or self-conscious notions.

The Christian scholar, Renan, offered that which he called the prayer of a skeptic. "O Lord - if there is a Lord; save my soul - if I have a soul. Amen" Many are the doubts in the modern sophisticated mind of the value and efficacy of praying to someone who might or might not be listening. Do not be troubled with these doubts. Nor be troubled, if you have another type of problem; if somehow you have grown self-conscious about offering a prayer. There seems to be a special embarrassment about prayer in our century of emancipation and modern thought. Think of the story, told and retold in Chassidic tradition, about the poor and humble Jew who was uneducated, and knew not how to read or write. This man came to the Synagogue on the New Year. Rabbi Yitzchak of Berditchev was just about to sound the Shofar. The people were filled with pious ecstasy. The Rabbi pronounced the benediction and raised the Shofar to his lips. But suddenly he put it back on the pulpit. The Chasidim were taken aback and looked at one another in perplexity. "Look, look how motionless the Rabbi stands" they whispered to each other. "Why does he not sound the Shofar? What is he waiting for? Woe unto us, woe unto us. Who knows what visions he now beholds in the upper spheres of heaven on this Holy Day of Rosh Hashanah?" Again they murmured to each other. "What agonies he must be going through. He must be fighting with Satan for the souls of all of us. Look how tense he is." But soon the blast of the Shofar vibrated mightily in the Synagogue and after the Service as people pressed him for the meaning of the mysterious interval, he turned to them and said, "as I recited the benediction over the Shofar, I saw in a vision that at the far end of our Synagogue stood a villager who was illiterate, who knew not how to pray for he knew not how to read. I observed that he wanted to pray with us, but he could not make out the words in the prayer book.



All he knew was the alphabet, just the simple letters. But his longing to pray grew more impassioned. I could see it in his eyes, and he could not stand speechless any longer and so, in a moment of inspiration, he lifted his eyes and murmured in tones which only I could hear: 'O God Master of the universe, Thou are the maker of all beautiful prayers. I know not how to read to Thee. But I give Thee the single letters of the alphabet, "Aleph, Bes, Gimel, Daled, and Thou O God build Thyself a prayer from the letters which I offer Thee'. And so, continued the Rabbi, the Holy One on high who hearkens to every beat of the human heart, began to make Himself a prayer out of the letters which this untutored Jew had offered. Naturally I could not sound the Shofar until the Holy One blessed be He had created for Himself a beautiful prayer from that Jew"

We today may be very literate and very sophisticated. We have the benefit of more education than any other generation has ever been privileged to enjoy. But there are still many of us who do not know how to pray. We must learn as the skeptic learns, and as the untutored simple Jew learned, that if we have something to say from our hearts to God, we should say it and be unembarrassed and unselfconscious. If we feel joy and happiness, let us express it in the terms we know best; if we are thankful for some great joy which has occurred in our lives, let us pour out these thanks so that all men can hear. In so doing we not only thank God but we teach other men to be grateful, and in teaching them to be thankful you help them to grow less hard, less calloused, less selfish so that they too may some day be able to give thanks for all the blessings which they enjoy.

The last thing and perhaps the most important to be said about prayer is this: Successful prayer should inspire us to go out and accomplish the very thing we are praying for. During the Ovinu Malkenu,



we said, "Our Father, our King cause all hate and oppression to vanish from the earth". This is a prayer of self inspiration, of ennobling our standards, a prayer in which we ask God to cause all hate and oppression to vanish from the earth. Does God cause hate and oppression to come upon earth? I think we agree that hate and oppression are creations not of God but of man, and can be removed only by man. Thus, if in the course of praying to God to cause hate and oppression to vanish, we help ourselves to understand that we must do that task, then we go forth from having uttered that prayer, with a firmer and nobler resolve to accomplish the good for which we have pleaded. When we pray for peace of prosperity or contentment or equality, when we pray for any of the ideals and values of life, let us never forget that these will be secured on earth only when we secure them, not before. And so the purpose of such prayers is to enthuse and inspire us to go forth into the world to work for the establishment of peace or equality or lack of oppression or love instead of hate.

The great Negro, Fredrick Douglass, once said that in the days when he was a slave he often used to pray for freedom, but that eventually he learned that his prayer for freedom was not answered until the prayer got down into his own heels and he ran toward freedom. He had to fight and work to achieve that for which he had merely prayed. There is a fable of Aesop about the wagon driver who could not get his wagon out of the mud in which it was stuck. He fell down and began to pray that God would give the horses strength to pull it out. Suddenly Hercules appeared to him and said "Get up, man; get up and put your shoulder to the wheel" Often when we pray for some thing God is very likely to say "Get from your knees. Get up and go out and answer that prayer yourself". The wagon driver put his shoulder to the wheel and pushed the wagon out of the mud.

I do not think that we can all be like Frederick Douglass or the man in Aesop's fable. Obviously, not every prayer can be answered by our own action and our own conduct. But many of the prayers which express



our yearnings for long term goals in society can be answered only by our actions in the struggle to achieve those goals. And so what the prayer does is to help us formulate and concretize in our own minds just exactly what it is we want, and then it gives us strength to go out and work for that cause or that objective. When we say "O God save our people in Europe," that prayer should serve to stimulate us to help with all necessary action to accomplish that end.

*mystic* Tonight is a night of birth. Tonight a New Year is being born.

Tonight a new chance is being given mankind to recreate the world in God's image. Tonight we have raised our voices and said "O God hear our prayer. Make this a better world. Make this a peaceful world. Make us better people." These prayers God will hear, but these prayers we must answer for ourselves.

We shall be praying in the year ahead for help in need, for help in the pain and anguish and travail which the events of the coming year will undoubtedly bring to many of us. We shall pray when we are sick, when we are afraid, when we are alone. And these prayers will surely comfort us. Let us also learn how to pray with thanks in joy and in gratitude for blessings given us. Let us learn to pray without embarrassment in whatever words come most easily to our lips. Let us learn to pray with doubts in our minds or without doubts, for in prayer we shall become better people, and shall act to accomplish our desires.

During the long night of birth, when the father paces the corridors of the hospital, and when each of us paces the corridors of his own mind, his own dreams, his own hopes, let us learn to rely on powers greater than ourselves and let us, with the help of that power, usher in a New Year, wherein we shall make some improvements, we shall note some tiny progress, we shall take some faltering step on the path toward justice and peace. If each of us acts to do this, then the New Year will be better than the old.