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Rosh Hashanah messages. September 1954.

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President Eisenhower's Rosh Hashanah Message

"On the occasion of the Jewish New Year, my warm greetings go to all Americans of Jewish faith.

"For the tens of centuries spanned by the history of the Jewish people, members of your race have given to mankind almost unbelievable examples of courageous devotion to noble principles — to justice, to liberty, to the right of men to worship according to the inner voice of conscience. Such are the principles which can now give the only sure guide to all men as they seek to establish true peace in the world, the peace which common people everywhere long for in their hearts.

"From this New Year's Day forward, may the inspiration of your devotion to these ideals give an ever more brilliant light to the path which leads to a real harmony and concord among nations."

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

President

1954

message to
Christie

Rock Harkness message - 1954- 5715

A CENTURY OF CONFUSION --

AN ETERNITY OF HOPE

*Thank you Mr. 2.
Please to offer R.H. message*

This appears to be a terrible century of confusion and uncertainty. Old verities have been overturned and even fixed things such as time and space seem to have been upset. The century opened with the conquest of the air - it may very well close with the conquest of space. As man has catapulted from invention to invention, from new hypothesis to new theorem, he has lost fixed polarity and nothing abides. He seems to be a puppet, obeying the strings which are manipulated by his own detached inventiveness. He is tossed from side to side, with no control.

Catastrophic wars, economic dislocations, social upheavals, racial tensions have marked and marred the rapid march of the century thus far. These are the neurotic manifestations of mankind's insecurity. Suicidal and murderous tendencies in the individual are understood by psychiatrists and psychologists. These same tendencies in larger groups of individuals, states, nations must be similarly understood by sociologists and social scientists of other disciplines. Perhaps answers will be forthcoming.

At any rate, whatever clues may ultimately be provided by the diligent social scientists, rootless and fearful man meanwhile wanders in a sea of doubt. The problems of life seem so overwhelming and insoluble that he seeks to escape them, either through immersion in a fatuous optimism that somehow all will be well - or through drowning himself in a mood of incurable pessimism. Escapists of the former variety desert the real problems

of politics, economics and government, seeking relief in panaceas and nostrums which promise peace of mind and soul. Escapists of the latter species become convinced that man is incurably evil, and turn to existentialism or neo-orthodoxy.

To sum up: scientific progress has far outstripped man's moral capacity to control the demonic forces unleashed in nature; nothing is permanent anymore; evil seems to have swept the world; there is no salvation except through withdrawal; perhaps God does not exist, or has Himself withdrawn.

^{may} "All things ^{may} change, but ^{"I the Lord change not"} ~~Thou alone changest not~~," says the Bible. This is a profoundly Jewish statement of faith. And it is only ^{the} ~~a~~ capacity to find an answer in faith which will enable modern man (modern Jew, as well) to discard the cloak of fear and confusion, replacing it with a mantle whose cloth is woven of many threads designed to give warmth and encouragement. On all sides we hear the slogan, the pathetic plea, the yearning cry - "man needs faith". "If only man could recapture the simple faith of his fathers." "What the religious leaders should give us is faith." All this is said as though faith were a commodity to be plucked from the shelf, dusted off, and taken internally with the guaranteed efficacy of Dr. Snake-oil's Patent Remedy.

Yes, it is true, - man needs faith to give him a central core of things in which he can believe as fixed and firm verities in the midst of a wildly gyrating world. But this faith is no patent medicine, compounded by a charlatan. It is an elixir which has been distilled slowly and carefully over millenia by devoted and searching men.

Judaism possesses many elements comprising its faith and any or all of these, taken together or separately constitute a prescription which has, for many ages, brought relief from pain, clear light from confusion, and provided a rock in the midst of quicksand. This prescription, to be helpful must be understood by the patient, must be acceptable to him, and eagerly welcomed. Then it will do its work well.

Long books and many lectures are required to delineate the elements of our faith. They are worth the reading and the hearing. For the moment, and for the brevity, let there be suggested these following few items of ^{Jewish} faith, so basic, so elemental that every man, Jew and Gentile alike, can be touched by them:

1. Man is half-beast and half-angel. This contradiction is not final but can be and will be resolved. Man will conquer his own evil nature. He is not doomed.
2. Moral progress is ^{inevitable} meritable. God and man are partners in the constant regeneration.
3. All life is a process of working out man's destiny on this earth. Human history is the battlefield of man's struggle toward godliness. History has meaning and purpose.
4. Life is to be affirmed, not denied. There is to be no running away. Wisdom is not found only in Nirvana, nor peace only in Heaven. Wisdom and peace are also on earth, if man "chooses" life vigorously.

What a tremendous reservoir of faith these few sentences embody! What endless strength and courage can be drawn from such

living waters! Each Rosh Hashonah we gather to re-assert these truths, and others, in a refreshing process of self-purification and self stimulation. The grandest themes of the whole world are repeated and repeated: God is King of the Universe; God remembers man in his struggles; God will eventually redeem man. (These are the Malchuyot, Zichronot, Shoferot prayers ^{on} ^{the} Rosh Hashonah ^{mussaf} morning.)

We repent our errors, restate the beliefs which make life welcome and challenging (not merely possible), and face the year with the most obstinate and unblinking optimism - for we have the long view, the Jewish view, the view of optimism.

As men, we might be tempted to lose heart in this century of confusion - as Jews we never relinquish faith, for we live in an eternity of hope.



menage to "Sentinel" 1954

WHAT THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS MEAN TO ME

by Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman

Temple Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun

The world is confused. People know that it can be destroyed. Each new bomb, first atom, then hydrogen, next cobalt, causes new shivers of apprehension.

The President himself goes to church almost every Sunday and prays for peace. When men are frightened, they seek solace in religion, prayer, faith.

Each year, at this season, the Jewish people celebrate the High Holy Days, a ten-day period embracing the New Year (Rosh Hashonah) and the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). These are solemn festivals marked by prayer and fasting, whose purpose is to stress anew a few simple truths by which man can live in this often-tense world.

We believe that God is concerned with the world and seeks man as His partner in the search for a just society. The three major themes of the New Year service are that God is King of the Universe; that God remembers man and helps him; that God is guiding history.

These themes give hope, build faith, and encourage moral conduct. We face the world realistically, aware of the dangers, the ugliness, the evil - but we also face it hopefully, aware that man's moral regeneration is possible and the world's problems soluble.

Sentinel article

1954

WHAT THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS MEAN TO ME

by Rabbi H. A. F.
Temple

The world is confused. People know that it can be destroyed. Each new bomb, first atom, then hydrogen, next cobalt, causes new shivers of apprehension.

omit
49 The President himself goes to church almost every Sunday and prays for peace. [Recently he spoke at the World Council of Churches and asked "every single person in every single country to join in a mighty, simultaneous, intense act of faith, to work unceasingly for a just and lasting peace".] When men are frightened, they seek solace in religion, prayer, faith.

59 Each year, at this season, the Jewish people celebrate the High Holy Days, a ten-day period embracing the New Year (Rosh Hashonah) and the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). These are solemn festivals marked by prayer and fasting, ^{whose} ~~the~~ purpose of these holy days is to stress anew a few simple truths by which man can live in this often-tense world.

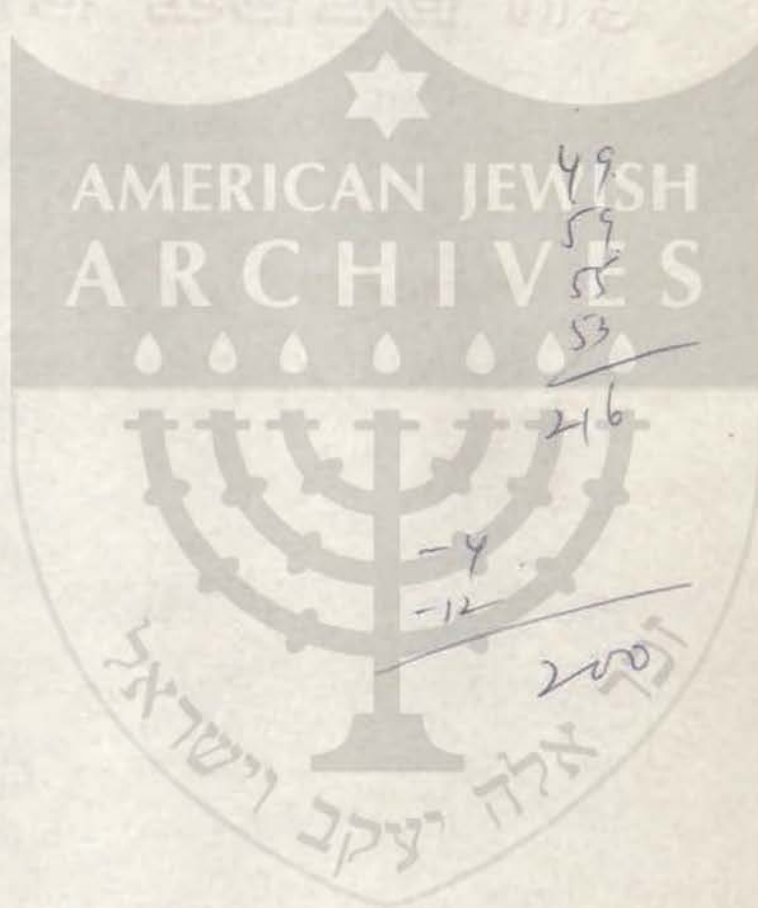
omit We believe that men are capable of moral improvement. They are not doomed by predestination or original sin. There is evil in man, but there is also good - and in this Holy Day period particularly each person strives to develop the better side of his nature.

We believe that human history is the battlefield on which the struggle for a better world is fought. Moral progress is possible and can find expression in improved forms of human society so that hunger and war and hatred can be overcome.

We believe that God is concerned with the world and seeks man as His partner in the search for a just society. The three major themes of the New Year service are that God is King of the Universe; that God remembers man and helps him; that God

is guiding history ~~toward its Messianic conclusion.~~

55 These themes give hope, build faith, and encourage moral conduct. ~~There is no need to be overwhelmed by a sense of desperation.~~ We face the world realistically, aware of the dangers, the ugliness, the evil - but we also face it hopefully, aware that man's moral regeneration is possible and the world's problems soluble.



The grandest themes in the world find expression at this High Holy Day season. We think of man's evil, the tragedy of his dual nature, sin and regeneration. We think of temptation, anguish, and the yearning toward the life-line of repentance. We think of all the cosmic issues of destiny, purpose and God. These are great and heavy thoughts, which seem faintly to oppress us throughout the ten days. Perhaps this is so because we pay so little attention to these themes and issues the ^{rest} balance of the year, and are unfamiliar with them. Hence we deal with them awkwardly during the Holy Days.

This should not be so. Instead of being oppressed, we should be exhilarated by these thoughts. Each year the opportunity is given each man, no matter how humble or ^{unfamiliar} ~~uninitiated~~, to dwell upon the mysteries of life. Each man can ask and answer tremendous questions for himself. Each man who reads the prayers carefully can be inspired and ennobled.

This is a time of purging, catharsis, reflection and rebirth. It is the noblest time in the Jewish year. May you use this period well, to prepare for a happy and peaceful New Year.

Rosh Hashonah Message

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