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**MS-915: Joshua O. Haberman Papers, 1926-2017.**

Series A: Sermons and Prayers, 1940-2016.

Subseries 1: High Holidays, 1941-2016, undated.

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Sermons and notes, 1945-1946.

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"CONSIDER THE YEARS"

The call of the Shofar is like a reveille for the Jewish people. A year has passed -- a new year has been born. And the Shofar shouts into our ears: "Awake ye sleepers!" Look back upon the past year, the year you helped make ---- look forward into the future, the year you will help shape.

Truly, the Bible spoke for a time such as this the words:

זָכוֹר יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

"Remember the days that passed

Consider the years..." (Deut. 32:7)

Look back at the stretch of time which lies behind --- consider the years --- profit by experience!

A year has passed, what does it teach us? There is only one lesson which ~~wandaws~~ recent history taught the Jewish people; we must stress it this morning:

Some of the nations may find satisfaction in the folly of imperialism and dictatorship and thrill to the gamble for world conquest ---- for us Jews it is either freedom in democracy, or death!

If the six million Jews of Europe could speak from their fresh graves, if they had left for us a testament, they would say: Keep fighting for democracy!

The basic instinct of self-preservation must make us soldiers in the cause of democracy. How can we make it stronger and more secure?

Are you thinking of China, India or Germany?

Here we live --- this community is our first concern!

This is the place our boys are coming back to, they fought for it gallantly, they gave their blood, their health, <sup>and how well you know</sup> even their lives for this American town.

Will they find decent schools for their children, harmony among the races, a clean city government for and by the people? Let us not confine religion within the four walls of the Temple --- it belongs out on the streets where the teeming masses of human beings are moving, laboring and suffering. The prayer in the pew is ineffective unless it inspires righteous action on the market places.

Let Jews be known as the most progressive and civically active section of Mobile -- that will be the first thing we can do for democracy.

Perhaps the finest contribution which Jewry has made to America is the example of voluntary social service which so many of our brethren have set. In a world accustomed to coercion, the free and willing generosity of a Guggenheim, Julius Rosenwald, Strauss and Louis Marshall lifted up a torch of light and hope for mankind.

I wish to say it again and again, my dear friends, the money which you raised for our Welfare Fund, the Community Chest and other humanitarian causes, were the biggest things you did for democracy.

American armies impressed the world with our country's military might, but your work of charity made America beloved among the nations. The United Jewish Appeal has earned for us

the respect of our fellow citizens, and admiration for America in countries abroad.

Although the word, democracy, is of Greek origin --- democracy is we understand it has its root in Judaism. The great difference between the Greek and the Jewish idea of democracy is that the ancient Greek statesmen knew only of privileges derived from citizenship, while we Jews developed the deeper and broader concept of fundamental human rights, divinely ordained, inalienable and universally binding. The conflict between these two concepts is still with us today --- there are men like Bilbo and Rankin who would preserve democracy for a restricted clientel, for a select and privileged group only, and there is the progressive wing that would extend democracy as a universal norm of life in the true spirit of religion.

That is the spirit in which our prophets proclaimed that across all human alienations there was One God, and every son of man His child. (Maleachi 2:10)

האם לא כלנו בן אלהים אחד? האם לא כלנו בן אלהים אחד? האם לא כלנו בן אלהים אחד? האם לא כלנו בן אלהים אחד? האם לא כלנו בן אלהים אחד? האם לא כלנו בן אלהים אחד? האם לא כלנו בן אלהים אחד? האם לא כלנו בן אלהים אחד? האם לא כלנו בן אלהים אחד? האם לא כלנו בן אלהים אחד?

"Have we not all One Father?" cried the prophet, "Hath not One God created us?"

That is religious democracy: Across all lines that men have drawn, it says first of all and deepest of all: "Have we not all One Father?"

The second basic conviction which religion adds to democracy is the value of every personality. Our reverence of the individual adores man as the image of God, reaches beneath all divisions and lifts up every life, whether Christian or Jew, Anglo-Saxon or Indian, freeman or slave, saying: You are a child of God, a person of

infinite value.

I am sure that all of you want democracy to be hallowed by this lofty religious spirit.

Friends, this Temple wants to do the job in this community. It shall continue to be ever more effectively an instrument for the education of anew generation of proud, progressive and idealistic Jews; it shall continue to represent Israel primarily as a religious people with a universal message for all mankind. And finally, this Temple wants to be a force for friendship and deepening fellowship with all religious groups. We want to build bridges across all divisions which cut our community into fragments and meet with all men of good will on a high and dignified spiritual plain.

Therefore, we call on you, at this hour, for support --- support in participation, in lay leadership and in your generous contributions.

We are convinced that you realize how much our security depends on the progress of democracy. You want Judaism to play a leading part in it. We are confident of your support.

With grateful heart, we greet the New Year, born at the dawn of a new era of peace. We thank our God that He has removed from us the necessity to kill and destroy and that we can now dedicate ourselves to the inspiring task of healing the wounds of humanity and of building a new world of freedom in which our children can smile again in the sunshine.

May God strengthen our resolution with His spirit so that we may bring to the work of peace and reconstruction the same devotion and sacrifice which enabled us to prevail in battle.

May God bless you and bestow His peace upon those that  
are near and those that are far. Amen.



"ONE MAN'S WAR AGAINST WAR"

Tonight we are beginning the year 5706 of our Calendar. The last 3500 years we have been conscious of our existence as a distinct community and brought forth events and personalities of far reaching effect on world history. That makes us an old and important people. There are two kinds of old age: some get old, others grow old. Israel is a people who grew as it advanced in age, we are an experienced people.

When Israel was young they looked into the future with pride and self-consciousness like young men do. Some day, they hoped, one of their kings would receive the homage of all crowned heads and Israel would rule above the nations.

All nations pass through that stage -- some, fortunately, pass beyond it. Yes, time came and that naive, national dream was shattered. Our ancestors lost power and independence and their vision of the future grew far-sighted and mature. Not power, but righteousness would be Israel's distinction in the future and all the world would live together as brothers in righteousness.

And strange to say, the man who first gave voice to this great universal hope was a man who lived in a heart-breaking distressing time of warfare, when victorious armies would rip up the flesh of prisoners with threshing irons and slash open the womb of pregnant women.

In such a brutal age, Isaiah told his countrymen of a new generation who shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Can you imagine how the cynics must have laughed at him? If you want peace, they must have answered, give us more swords and more soldiers. But this was precisely the novelty of Isaiah's message that he rejected the power politics approach to the problem of war and peace and discovered it as a great moral and spiritual task.

How was universal peace to be accomplished? As the first condition of peace, Isaiah demanded the affirmation of the One Eternal Father by all mankind:

וְרַבֵּי עַמִּים יֵצְאוּ וְיֹאמְרוּ בְּיַד יְהוָה יִשְׁׁבְּטוּנוּ וְיֵצְאוּ מִן־הַר יְהוָה וְיָבֹאוּ אֶל־הַר יְהוָה וְיֹאמְרוּ בְּיַד יְהוָה יִשְׁׁבְּטוּנוּ וְיֵצְאוּ מִן־הַר יְהוָה וְיָבֹאוּ אֶל־הַר יְהוָה

"And many people shall go and say: Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord." (Is.2:3)

Only if we begin to meet one another as plain men --- not as Americans first, English first, or Germans first, and not divided in white, black or yellow skin, and not set apart as Aryan or semitic blood, but bound together eternally and inseparably by a common origin in God's creation --- only then shall we achieve the spiritual unity which is the prerequisite of peace.

Is our Jewish doctrine of the spiritual unity of mankind an idle and fruitless dream? Stop to think, I beg you, that this was the very issue of this war! The Nazis challenged our truth -- they assailed and ridiculed it, tried to goosestep it into the mud and drown it in blood. Yet our doctrine was sufficiently strong and alive to rally almost all nations to its defense. Not in vain, were the 3000 years of missionary activities of our people in the course of which we gave birth to two other universal religions spreading some of our ideals throughout the earth. Not in vain had Israel preached the truth of ONE MANKIND.



And if, at last, the idea of the United Nations is become reality --- remember its origin: the vision of Isaiah.

How much do you expect of the United Nations' Organization? My good friends, we must not belittle the good will and sound planning which created that organization -- but we must not deceive ourselves either. The United Nations' organization is a sign of progress; it demonstrates mankind's essential unity; it is a meeting ground for the lawful settlement of international disputes. But disputes will arise and may again grow beyond our ability of settling them peacefully unless we meet the second condition of peace which no one stated more clearly than our Isaiah: פִּיֶּיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׁמַע וְיִשְׁמַע יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

"The work of righteousness shall be peace" (Is. 32:17)

These are important words now that the war has ended. They tell us of the great unfinished task before us. As our good friend, Rabbi Korn stated so beautifully in his message: The war against evil and wickedness is a never ending struggle: How can there be peace as long as poverty, exploitation and racial discrimination deprive millions of men of self-respect and decent living? Are not our own slums and Jim Crow walls of separation breeding ground for civil unrest and criminality?

The righteous society, with freedom from want and fear, what a beautiful dream! A little sunshine, decent housing and economic security for the frustrated, poverty stricken masses of humanity, yes,

Not the work of science, not the work of politics

but the work of righteousness shall be peace.

This truth is self-evident -- yet will people ever learn? When Professor Nobel invented the dynamite, the world was stunned by the explosive power of that chemical. They feared that

no nation could survive a war if that new terrible weapon was used. Peace leagues and world courts were created ... and some years later, world war #1 proved mankind's dismal failure to profit by experience.

We have <sup>now</sup> liberated the tremendous hidden power of the atom, an inexhaustible source of energy for good as for evil. Shall men learn the lessons of Nagasaki and Hiroshima?

(Is.11:6) *וְיָצֵא עֵלְמָוֶת וְיָבִיא שָׁלוֹם*

"And "A little child shall lead them," said our Isaiah.

A child will be born to be prince of peace. This is our great hope that mankind always has a new beginning with every new generation born. This chance has been spoiled time and time again, never more worse than in our days when German, Italian and Japanese youth was corrupted by the doctrines of fascism. Yet, despite the many missed opportunities, we can find reassurance, indeed our only hope for mankind's future, in Isaiah's vision that another generation will come, another chance to begin anew.

"And a little child shall lead them" -- a free, clean and unspoiled generation will be prince of peace.

Max Lerner, one of the keenest political observers, a practical realist, entitled his recent book: "Ideas are Weapons." Will that One Man Isaiah with his great ideas win the war against war? Shall we Jews succeed in teaching the world that Mankind is One, that peace is the result of righteousness, and that the education of a clean new generation is our most urgent and sacred task?

We are an old people -- patience is the fruit of our  
experience -- and we believe the prophetic law: *אִם אֵין אֵמוּנָה לֹא יִשְׁתַּדֵּל*

"Unless ye have faith, ye will not endure!" (Is. 7:9)



"I CHANGED MY MIND"

Man's finest declaration of freedom is that little phrase so often said quite casually: "I changed my mind." Slave though we may be in all else, we are free in mind. We can change our thoughts and our will. The warless world, the united mankind, the immediate problem of re-educating the Germans and the Japanese, even our own Jewish hope of eliminating anti-semitism, all that men hope and pray for, hinges on faith that man can rise above his evil passions, pull himself up by his bootstraps and make something better of himself by changing his mind.

How can we bring about that welcome change of mind?

Give man credit for the power of reason. If you can make a human being think and sit in judgement over his deeds, you have won a battle. Our rabbis say the Bible was written in the language of man. Indeed, you will look in vain for saints or supermen among our heroes. They were all human beings with their strength and shortcomings. Take David. We know him as the most gifted Hebrew king. A Conqueror and a Poet on the throne! Yet, one night, we are told, king David surrendered to animal passion. He took a woman although she was the wife of one of his soldiers. The following morning, he called her unsuspecting husband and ordered him to deliver a sealed letter to his commanding officer. The soldier did as he was told, not knowing that the letter contained his own assignment to a deadly mission. David's scheme worked, the soldier died a useless but a hero's death.

A few days later, the prophet Nathan had the courage to appear before the king and finding him calm and reasonable, he told him the scope and ugliness of his crime. But, now, comes the remarkable thing: David who could have silenced Nathan for ever by merely lifting a finger, fell on his knees, humiliated himself as no other king had ever done and cried out:

I have sinned against the Lord ---- Purge me, wash me and  
I shall be whiter than snow; Create me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a steadfast spirit within me. (Ps. 51)

With a few words of reason, merely explaining to David what he had done in the blindness of passion, Nathan caused an inward change in the king, caused him to cry out in mortification and shame: for forgiveness! for a new heart and a New spirit!

We believe in the power of reason. Mankind will improve if we help them see and understand ~~their mistakes.~~

The first thing fascism did was to capture the schools and poison their youth with lies. They knew that their evil doctrines could not prosper in the light of reason. And the first thing we shall be doing in lands liberated by our conquest will be the restoration of freedom to think and to teach. For we believe that free minds are likely to become noble minds.

A word of caution is now in place: Free reason, however necessary, cannot lift mankind from its present degradation. For, well we know how cold and cruel scientific men can be. The human intellect must be tempered and guided by love.

Hosea was a fiery young preacher who did not pull any punches. He hated his people. He despised their morals and prophesied unto Israel utter destruction. Do you think people

had patience to listen to him? He was ignored like a raging madman until an accident, a personal tragedy, changed him and gave him a new power of speech.

One day, his wife, Gomer, ran away and became an adulteress. His immediate impulse demanded her death in accordance with the law of that day. But soon, Hosea's noble soul rebelled against this conclusion. Gomer had proven unfaithful, but deep in his heart he felt that his love had not ended. It surged within him, it was stronger than strict justice, it silenced vengeance! And Hosea waited and received her forgivingly when she returned to him.

This personal experience deeply affected Hosea's religious outlook. If he, a mortal man, loved a woman despite her unfaithfulness would God cast off Israel because of their sins? Hosea reversed his attitude and emerged a much more kind and mellow person.

He did not surrender one iota of the bitter truth he was called to reveal, but he said it now with the sweet and persuasive tongue of sympathy and compassion:

"And I will betroth thee unto Me for ever, O Israel

Yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and

in justice, and in lovingkindness and in compassion. (Hos 2:21)

Righteousness and justice remained the core of his message but because he said it now with compassion, he reached the heart of his people and they listened to him.

*We must not become too embittered*  
The crimes of the Germans and Japanese must be punished, but severity alone will not soften their sinful hearts. As our rabbis say, we must push them away with one hand, and draw them close to us with the other. Our justice will purify them, but our mercy must receive them with the hand of a brother!

Our own boys have killed, their hands are stained with blood --- but we are not worried --- we know that when ~~they come home to us,~~ the love of parents, wives and children will heal the wounds of their spirit. Love cures evil.

Apply this to anti-semitism. Yes, they hate us for no reason. Not only we, other peoples too are hated, minorities and majorities. This is not a perfect world.

What shall be our strategy against the evil in man? Friends, I believe we have always had the right strategy! For, in so far as Israel has consciously preached the message of One Mankind -- that message of universal love -- if that is the historic task for which we have labored and shall labor in the future -- then we are on the right path. ~~MMMMMMMMMM~~ That great idea of the ONE MANKIND will ultimately change the minds of bigots and fanatics.

My dear friends, you must believe it, for without hope nothing can be done. Think of our <sup>late</sup> great president Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He came to us, a ~~God-sent~~ leader at a time of black despair. Millions of men wasted the days in front of soup kitchens, tramps populated the highways. The country was on the brink of revolution, a prey for the fangs of fascism. But with his confident smile and his triumphant motto: "Fear nothing but fear itself!" he turned bitterness into hope and rescued the nation from its crisis.

Churchill accomplished the same with the prospect of victory which he painted in glowing colors as reward for his people's blood, sweat and tears.

And 50 years ago, Theodore Herzl performed a like miracle, transforming the beaten and humbled Ghetto Jew of Eastern Europe into a generation of pioneers with the glow of pride and achievement in their

eyes, merely by his promise to restore Israel as a free nation in their ancient homeland.

My dear friends, man will change, if you enlighten his reason, win him with love, and refresh him with hope.

אמר רבינו: "אם יאמר לך שיש מי שנסיון עשה ונמצא לא נמצא

said our rabbis: "IF one tells you I have tried and have not found ---- do not believe it. What shall we not believe? That he tried!

We shall try and try again, until we find that better mankind! It can be done --- so help us God! Amen.





Only man repents, the animal cannot sit in judgment over itself. And that is our only hope for progress: we shall learn to judge ourselves a little better and, thus, humanity will improve.

But what are the workings of self-judgment, what makes repentance effective? Perhaps we can find guidance in Hosea's appeal:

וּבְרָאשֵׁי הַיּוֹם יָשׁוּבָה אֶל־יְהוָה וְשׁוּבָה אֶל־יְהוָה

"Take with you words and return to the Lord."

(Hos. 14:3)

Did the prophet mean to say that words alone can do the trick? After all, are not words those easy apologies, the convenient words of regret? And even if the prophet referred to the words of prayer -- well, you know, a prayer can be said very quickly and it isn't always sincere. Is that all there is to repentance? Something much more important must be added. The prophet hints to it when he says: And return to the Lord. It is the active part of repentance, doing something about it, not just standing still, but retracing our steps and regaining purity by our deeds, that is repentance. Therefore the call of the prophet is: Take with you words -- arouse your spirit with prayer and return to the Lord --- transform your prayer into action.

One of our rabbis put it in these words: A man who speaks words of repentance but does not improve his conduct is like a person clutching in his fist a lump of dirt. All the waters of the ocean can not wash him clean until he throws away the dirt which soils his hand.

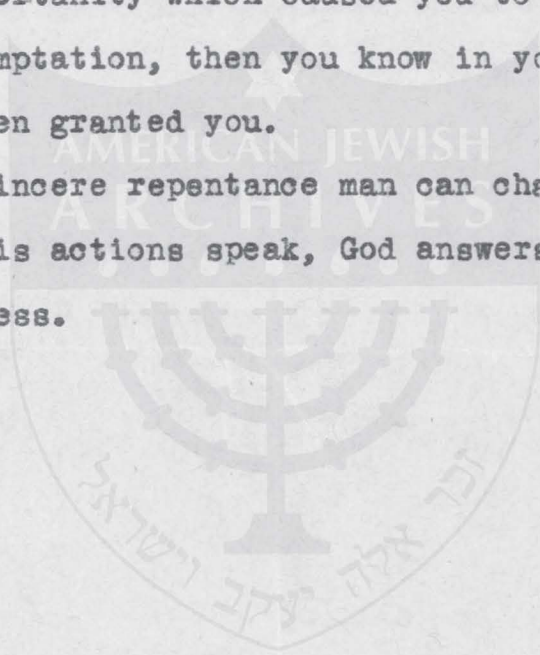
This, then, is the Jewish idea of repentance: Cast off your evil and your prayers will be received.

How and when do we learn that our repentance has obtained for us forgiveness from on high?

Rabbi Judah explained it in the following manner:

If you have done repentance and you go out and you are confronted with the same opportunity which caused you to sin before and you resist its temptation, then you know in your heart that forgiveness has been granted you.

Through sincere repentance man can change himself inwardly. When his actions speak, God answers with his merciful forgiveness.



" SUCCESS! "

America loves the word : "success." All the world loves it. Israel, too, craved success. And there was a time when our fathers were riding high on the crest of power and prosperity. The commercial rival city of Damascus was soundly defeated; an alliance had just been concluded with Assyria, the greatest military power in the east and, in addition, with sound self-reliance, the Jewish kingdom had stocked up a formidable cavalry, in those days still a new weapon of war.

And out of the clear sky, the voice of a certain Hosea was heard: *שׁוּבוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל* "RETURN, O ISRAEL! "

What was wrong? *אֲשׁוּר לֹא יִשְׁעֵנוּ וְכָבֹד לֹא יִשְׁעֵנוּ*

"ASSYRIA SHALL NOT SAVE US; WE SHALL NOT RIDE UPON HORSES"

And as Hosea scorned the success of Samaria 3 millenia ago, so he would tell America today: Watch out! Your military alliances and your new weapons shall not save you.

We have been magnificently successful and, already, a wave of over-confidence is sweeping through our nation: We have power, we are beginning to rely upon it too much. One of our congressional leaders recently proposed that America enforce peace for all time with an atomic bomb-squadron. Instead of busying ourselves with the solution of the social and economic problems in the world, the only insurance of permanent peace, we are flirting with the easy way out: holding the world in check at the point of our bayonettes.

A muscle-conscious America better understand in time the Biblical word: "THE RACE IS NOT TO THE SWIFT, NOR VICTORY TO THE STRONG." (Eccl. 9:11)

Nonesense! -- some will say -- we beat our enemies because we were stronger.

Remember Pearl Harbor! -- but in a different sense. Not Japan's treachery was the remarkable thing, but our own weakness at that time and our quick recovery. The enemy was far ahead in preparedness. Yet, because our democratic society with its respect for the individual, favors the blossoming of initiative and nurtures the genius of science "the race did not go to the swift" in attack but to the creative and skillful in team work.

Return, O America, first and above all, to the spirit of team work and to all that makes it possible: mutual responsibility, equality and comradeship. Not the secret of the atomic bomb, but the secret of team work will save America and the world.

My dear friends, our teacher Hosea has yet another word for us, standing on the dizzy height of success:

"LET US NOT CALL THE WORK OF OUR HANDS, GODS." (Hos.14:4)  
What did he have in mind? To his countrymen who had multiplied gold and silver (Hos 2:10) Hosea cried out: Don't worship your money.

Please, do not misunderstand Judaism. We attach no virtue to poverty as such. On the contrary, our rabbis valued the legitimate comforts and joys of life. They even said: "A beautiful wife, a beautiful home and beautiful furniture are means of putting a man in a cheerful frame of mind. " We believe that material

sufficiency is essential to the dignity of a man's life, that it enables him to develop spiritually. We believe life is meant to be beautiful, satisfying and secure. We do not find God in gloom and darkness, but say with the Bible: "God answereth man in the joy of his heart." (Eccl. 5:19) Remember and treasure the days of your life. But, almost in the same breath, the Bible continues:

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do by thy strength, (means, capacity) that do." (Eccl. 9:10)

Wealth is strength, another word for it is "means." And, like every tool, its possession carries responsibility.

Have you read a recent resolution by a private pressure group / in town setting itself in vigorous opposition to the so-called Wagner-Ellender bill? That bill wants to provide public housing construction in the postwar period for the low-income group. A guest speaker from Birmingham described a fight being waged in that city against public housing and concluded that legislation had successfully blocked construction of 10,000 low cost housing units.

Friends, what a success! 10,000 or more poor people thrown back into their slums until they find allegedly available good, clean, second hand housing!

Shall we be thrilled that the prize of real estate in Birmingham will not suffer the least reduction because cheap public housing has been blocked successfully?

What shall we think of the unanimous endorsement which the Birmingham strategy received in our community?

Our rabbis loved to think of us as a great spiritual force in the world. They rejoiced in the contrast between our patriarch Jacob and his brother Esau whose preference for a mess of pottage stamped him a materialist. You remember how Jacob, having obtained the birthright from his older brother, disguised himself in order that he receive the blessing reserved for Esau. He took the garments of his older brother and covered his hands with the skin of a goat because Esau was known as a hairy man. And when, at last, blind old Isaac stretched out his arms to bestow the blessing of the first-born upon Jacob, believing all the while that Esau stood before him, he happened to touch the fur on Jacob's hands and listened to his voice and, suddenly, doubt seized the old man and he said to himself:

"The voice is the voice of Jacob, yet the hands are the hands of Esau."

And the rabbis offer a profound interpretation of this sentence. Why is Jacob recognized by his voice and Esau by his hands? And they say: "As long as Jacob's voice is heard in prayer and spiritual pursuits, the hands of Esau will not prevail against him."

Friends, let us never take the part of Esau lifting the hand to grab money; but let us remain true to the role of Jacob, sounding a voice of charity in this materialistic world.

If you have missed an opportunity to do the work of God in accordance with the means He has given you, then:

"RETURN O ISRAEL UNTO THE LORD, THY GOD"

Return to him with the conviction that we who have, have responsibility for the spiritual and material welfare of our fellowman.

Our enemies, personified in Esau, will not prevail  
against <sup>an</sup> Israel who live by the prophetic rule:

NOT BY MIGHT, NOR BY POWER

BUT BY MY SPIRIT, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS!

(Zechariah 4:6)



It is most important for the happiness of man that his rational and emotional life are in harmony. If reason pulls one way and emotion the other, there is conflict -- and there can be no inner peace until that conflict is resolved.

~~The only persons who escape, at least temporarily, the clash and tension of reason and emotion are the lover and the scientist; for love is blind to reason and science is blind to emotion.~~

~~Ordinarily, however, we must reconcile the desire of the heart with the understanding of the mind in regard to all matters of importance.)~~ Surely that applies to Religion. If we Jews are to be happily adjusted in life, we must accept Judaism both emotionally and rationally. For rare indeed are those whose acceptance of Judaism is so purely a matter of love that they need not look for reasons to bolster up their faith. We might call them the absolute Jews. They acknowledge Judaism ~~in~~ instantly when challenged to do so even as a man identifies himself with his beloved. Such loyalty cannot be shaken by disadvantage or misfortune as we can see in the classic example of Abraham. Observe the full force and beauty of his acceptance of Judaism which is suggested in the opening words of our Torah.

"AND IT CAME TO PASS AFTER ALL THESE THINGS THAT GOD TESTED ABRAHAM." ----- What were all these things after which God put Abraham to the test? The preceding chapter tells us of an experience familiar to all Jews. Abraham had dug a well; his livelihood depended on that source of water. Suddenly, envious Philistines pounced on him and took away the well with violence. And after Abraham, the Jew, had been injured in his rights and suffered hardship at the hands of a hostile majority,



on top of all these things came the test. And the test itself was nothing but a challenge to make public confession of his faith:

"Abraham, Abraham, " God cried out, "do you still belong to Me, --- are you still a Jew? Pledge yourself and your son."

And Abraham's answer was a simple, unqualified <sup>U<sup>2</sup></sup> "HERE AM I."

A certain Rabbi Liezer makes an interesting comment on the verse: "And God called out unto him and said: Abraham, Abraham." ~~The strength of God's voice surpasses any sound.~~ It would have been sufficient if God had called Abraham but once. Why the repetition, Abraham, Abraham? The repetition indicates that God spoke not only to Abraham but to future generations: there is no generation, Rabbi Liezer concludes, which does not contain men like Abraham and there is no generation which does not contain men like Jacob.

Indeed, in every generation we have men like Abraham who respond to God and Israel without question and hesitation, saying <sup>U<sup>2</sup></sup> "Here am I" -- but what did Rabbi Liezer have in mind when he said that in every generation there are also men like Jacob?

It seems to me that Rabbi Liezer meant to suggest the contrast between the emotional attitude of Abraham and the rational attitude of Jacob. For, Jacob was probably the first Jew who examined the need and the reason for Jewish survival. It never occurred to Abraham that he could be anything else but a Jew. Yet, Jacob's family living in prosperous and powerful Egypt, was exposed to the attraction and temptation of a rich foreign culture. Egypt was then a relatively free and tolerant nation in which his own son Joseph could rise to the position of governor. Certainly, Jacob had to face the problem of assimilation. He was challenged to give his children good reason why they should remain a distinguishable

religious minority. And so, when the hour came for Jacob, standing on the threshold of death to counsel his family and to reveal his vision of the future in a final blessing, he said:

"THE GOD WHO HATH BEEN MY SHEPHERD ALL MY LIFE, BLESS THESE CHILDREN; LET MY NAME BE NAMED IN THEM, AND THE NAME OF MY FATHERS ABRAHAM AND ISAAC IN ORDER THAT THEY GROW STRONG, IN THE MIDST OF THE EARTH.

Jacob's blessing, it seems to me, contains three great ideas which inspire a wholesome attitude toward Judaism.

To begin with, we need confidence in our future as a people. And the only way for us to face the future bravely is to ~~hear~~ in mind the whole range of our inspiring past. That is precisely why Jacob began his blessing with the words: "THE GOD WHO HAS BEEN MY SHEPHERD ALL MY LIFE" Jacob's personal faith in God did not come from a moment's impression, but was based upon a life long experience and consciousness of God's guiding hand.

Similarly, we the descendants of Jacob must not judge by ~~flimsy~~ impressions of the moment and the impact of recent events, but we must see the future in the perspective of our unique and incomparable history as a people. Edomites, Philistines and Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians and Romans, all the peoples whose rapacious aggressions often reduced our numbers have disappeared into the abyss of oblivion, but the flock of Israel has been preserved.

If anything manifests the will of God, shaping up in the larger plan of history through the millenia, it is the incredible, almost miraculous survival of the Jewish people. It should inspire us with some measure of confidence in the future.

And yet, we have no right to depend on miracles. God meets us half-way provided we go the other half. Unless we ~~have~~ <sup>fulfill</sup> a basic condition, Israel will perish like all other nations of antiquity. The condition of Jewish survival is suggested in the second part of Jacob's blessing:

"AND LET MY NAME BE NAMED IN THEM, AND THE NAME OF MY FATHERS ABRAHAM AND ISAAC IN ORDER THAT THEY GROW STRONG"

Jacob saw the shining truth that we can be strong and secure only if we perpetuate the names of our ancestors, that is to say, remain loyal to our spiritual heritage.

Most people <sup>unfortunately</sup> have not the faintest idea what the perpetuation of Israel's spiritual heritage really means. Especially, some of our un-informed youth associate ~~with~~ Religion <sup>with</sup> conservatism, a clinging to conventions, a cringing before authority. Yet, those who have studied the birth and progress of Judaism will know that opposition to the status quo of the world has been a characteristic Jewish mood -- opposition to things as they are, in the interest of things as they ought to be.

Surely, the prophets of Israel did not seek to enforce the conventions of their day, but rebelled against them and preached a new message. When King Ahab executed Naboth, a simple farmer,

so that he could inherit his vineyard, the King had done something rather conventional among tyrants of the day. But, Elijah the prophet had the courage to stand up and make public protest.

And as Elijah risked life to speak truth in Samaria, so did Amos in Beth El and Isaiah at Jerusalem. What moved them to action? It was the simple though profound insight that a righteous God calls for justice among men.

Ours would be a far more righteous society, if we had enough men of the prophetic spirit. Most of us prefer to keep silent when we ought to be outraged by exploitation, racial and religious discrimination which we witness nearly every day. The word of Amos still holds true: "The prudent keep silent in such a time, for it is an evil time." The surest sign of moral infirmity is the silence of prudence, the refusal to meddle in the business and mischief of society. It is to the prudent and complacent that Judaism says; in the words of Rabbi Hillel:

"IN A PLACE WHERE THERE ARE NO MEN, STRIVE THOU TO BE A MAN"  
Vital religion must manifest itself by righteous intervention in an unrighteous society.

*my hands* It is this gallant spirit of Judaism for which our people has lived. From it we drew all our perseverance and all our strength to survive. As Jacob emphasized to his children -- we shall remain one of the important peoples of the world if we perpetuate the ideals of our ancestors *בין עמם* IN THE MIDST OF THE EARTH.

In the midst of the earth --- were Jacob's last words --- and that is Israel's great challenge today.

We have never been an obscure minority like the gypsies, but a significant people with a point of view which we have impressed upon half the world through our Bible and literature.

No matter how much we have suffered in recent years --- suffering must not silence the voice of Israel. Let us not be overly cautious as Jews but fearless and bold just because we are Jews. If our efforts to translate prophetic ideals into present day

reality meet with the contempt and abuse of bigoted wind-bags - especially of *the Mississippi variety - those who are not offended some decent Mississippi in or midst* like ~~Bilbo and Rankin~~, we should be proud of such opposition even as we may safely trust that the progressive forces and minds of America will march with us in the advance of our democracy. Not as neutral bystanders, but as interested, active participants ---- standing in the very midst of the earth --- can we make our contribution. as Jews.

With confidence in our future, with consecration to Judaism and the courage to translate it into action, we are truly invincible.

Our Rabbis tell a legend which illustrates a characteristic attitude of our people when facing troublesome times such as these:

When Adam, the first man, was created his happiness knew no end as he discovered the perfect beauty of the earth in the illumination of the rising sun. Yet, his joy soon gave way to sorrow and ultimately to great fear and bitterness as the sun sank into the West and darkness covered the earth. It was then, that an angel gave two heavy stones to Adam, one called *pen* darkness, and the other was called *SIN*  $\int$  bitterness, despair unto death.

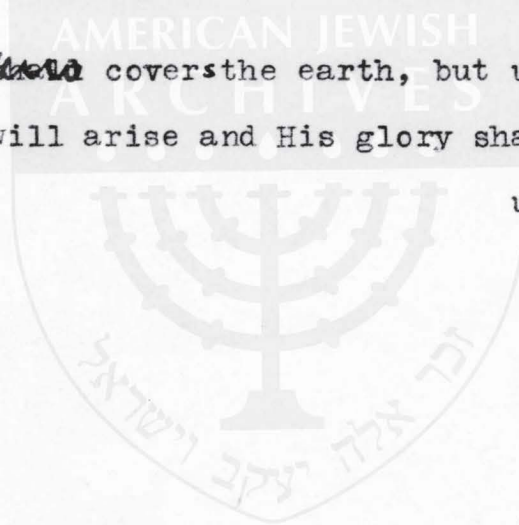
At first, Adam held the two stones in his hands and they

were unbearably heavy. But, at last, he seized upon the idea of rubbing the ~~two~~ stones and behold he had light.

And so my friends, we too are holding in our hands the stone of darkness and the stone of our bitterness. Never have we witnessed an age so dark and terrifying in its brutality. And, on the other hand, never have we felt so bitterly resentful almost desperate in our grief.

But, gloom and bitter brooding will not change the darkness. Rather let our bitterness harden into an iron will and let us <sup>let us liberate our oppressed hearts, in the battle for a cooperative humanity, a more perfect democracy</sup> strike the stone of evil. Then the word of Isaiah will come true:

Darkness ~~shall~~ cover the earth, but upon thee  
the Lord will arise and His glory shall be seen  
upon you.



From earliest antiquity to this day, the most esteemed among the professions has been the art of government. Particularly in the popular mind, the makers of policy have always been glorified, and, it seems to me, chiefly because of the veil of secrecy which concealed the business and personality of men in high places. Today, however, the whole art of diplomacy and statesmanship has been discredited in the ~~public~~ light of modern publicity. The ambassadors and ministers, even the presidents and kings appear as funbling, stumbling individuals not unlike the average citizen of the state. Unable to prevent the last war, they seem to be unable to make the peace. Perhaps it is too much to expect of diplomatic patchmakers to unite mankind upon a new and higher standard of international relations. Yet, nothing less than that was the vision born in the agony of war and anything less than that would be a betrayal of the sacrifice of our idealistic youth.

What is needed now are no mere statesmen, but men of moral greatness and prophetic vision, builders of humanity of the type exemplified by Moses. There was a man who could take a dozen different tribes, strip them of mutual jealousy and lust of power, fill them with a sense of kinship and responsibility and weld them together into a new and larger people.

If, by some miraculous power we could resurrect Moses, what would he tell the world at this crucial moment? It seems to ~~me~~ that that ~~his first words~~ might well be those of our Torah portion:

"YE ARE STANDING HERE TOGETHER THIS DAY, ALL OF YOU, BEFORE THE LORD YOUR GOD: YOUR PRINCES, YOUR TRIBES, YOUR ELDERS, AND YOUR OFFICERS, YOUR MEN, CHILDREN AND WIVES, THE STRANGER IN YOUR MIDST FROM THE WOODCHOPPER TO THE DRAWER OF WATER..."

YOU ARE STANDING HERE TOGETHER, ALL OF YOU...! This is the simplest and greatest truth of them all, would that it sank deep into our hearts! Yes, all of you, men women and children, black and white, red and yellow, all the races and nations, men of different professions and different beliefs you are all standing together in this life; you are facing destruction together, and nothing but your united effort can save you from the wars and weapons of the future.

There are no boundaries that separate one life from the rest; there are no circles within which you can move and live in isolation. You are standing together, however distant you may be... you and the man from Australia and the woman from Africa you are all of the same race, the human race, feel over the same pain, rejoice the same things, are born the same way and shall die under the same natural law. Some day, we shall understand what it really means, some day, we shall awaken to the full reality of the kinship and common destiny which binds man to man, and that will be the birthday of a new world community.

Countless are the teachings of our rabbis on the subject of mankind's unity, but perhaps the most beautiful expression of this truth is the concept of the Book of Life. Just think of it how magnificent this thought is: All of life can be compared to a single book. It is the greatest of all stories, and you and I are writing it, that Book of Life! Yes, everyone writes his sentence and somehow that sentence is continued and connected with other sentences and together they form a story which has neither a beginning



nor an end and yet is full of meaning and more perfectly coherent than any story written on earth.

We are all standing together like the sentences in a story, taken separately each sentence has little meaning, but together in the context of the whole story every sentence is important and meaningful.

A single human being out of context with the rest of humanity would not make any sense, for we can only think of man as an inter-related being.

Ask any man: who are you? Whatever he answers will reveal a relationship. If he gives you his name, it will indicate his family relationship; if he tells you his profession, you will know his function in society.

We are all standing together in life, because man can only be understood in relationship to his fellowman, ~~there is no life in isolation.~~ This insight into the real brotherhood of man is the basis of our ethics and if anything needs to be stressed today it is that.

But, there is another thought <sup>in the Torah portion of today</sup> which Moses intimated and which he would surely emphasize today were he in our midst.

Usually, before a speaker addresses a large gathering, he turns to the highest dignitaries in the audience and after paying them his courtesy, he commences his talk. Observe how Moses in the opening of his speech refused to draw such distinctions. On the contrary, he made it most clear that in his judgement everybody was of equal importance:

"YOU ARE STANDING HERE TOGETHER", he said, and then he mentioned every conceivable type of person present in the crowd all the way down to the woodchopper and the drawer of water. The most menial laborer deserved as much attention as the prince and the elder.

The time to emphasize the importance of ordinary people is now when colossal events make common lives seem insignificant. There is a spreading feeling that the common man no longer counts, but that feeling is wrong; every person counts and has a force for good or evil; life gives every one of us a certain number of bullets to shoot with, and every one has a chance to hit the target. No life is utterly fruitless and wasted; even the humblest and least productive human being has a place in the mysterious scheme of events. This was brought home to me as I read a remarkable autobiography of a Russian Jew.

Boris Schatz manifested an unusual talent for art early in his youth. His paintings and sculptures made with untutored hands aroused much attention and he was persuaded <sup>to</sup> ~~into~~ leave his little hometown. With high hopes he proceeded to Moscow to apply for admission in the famous Imperial Academy of Arts. The boy was rejected. He was told to apply again, ~~but~~ not as a Jew --- but as a convert. The young boy reacted with honor and dignity: he sacrificed his career and became a private tutor. Much time passed, and they were terrible, frustrating years, years of broken hopes and stifling drudgery. One day, as he instructed his dull pupil, he suddenly heard a peculiar chant which penetrated to his very soul. He could not make out the words, so he rushed to

the window and he stood speechless, as he saw in the blackness of the narrow yard the drooping figure of an old Jew with white hair. He was a beggar, stading in the rain, alone and forsaken and chanting in unintelligible words the song of his misery.

Boris Schatz felt pity such as he had never known before. With feverish hands, he modeled that man, it was the first statue which he had made in years and it brought him world wide fame. Eventually, Boris Schatz studied in Paris, then went to Palestine where he founded the famous Bezallem Art School and became one of the most gifted Jewish artists of our time.

There is much we could say about the secret spring of creative work, how a moment of utter absorption and dedication to another life can transform our inner self and inspire us to deeds we could not normally perform; there is much to be said about the nobility and integrity of Boris Schatz who would not surrender conscience and self-respect even at the ~~expense~~<sup>cost</sup> of a career. But, I am not looking at the achievements of Boris Schatz, rather I marvel at the wonderful role which destiny had preserved for that nameless beggar, for without him, there would have been no Boris Schatz.

Somehow that useless and unproductive beggar was instrumental in the birth of a great artist. Even if the beggar had done nothing useful of his own, indirectly, through his chant, he made a great contribution to the culture of the world.

My friends, it is impossible to judge the relative importance of people. One person is as important as the other; no one knows which opportunities will come our way, what part we are destined to play. Surely, the woodchopper and the drawer of water deserve to stand together with the prince and the elder, ~~one man is as important as the other.~~ *for the humblest of man has incalculable, unpredictable possibilities.*

There can be no peace and security in the world -- peace treaties and international organizations will be utterly useless -- unless we become more sharply aware of the importance and sanctity of every individual life. It is the core of Judaism which is most emphatically underscored in the following rabbinic tale.

One day, as Abraham was sitting at the entrance of his tent, he saw an old man, tired and weary approach. Abraham ran to meet him and said: "Pray, my lord, do not pass the door of your servant Abraham, but lodge here for the night."

"No, here in the open I will lodge," answered the old man. But Abraham insisted and the old man entered his tent. After the old man had eaten his meal, Abraham said to him: "Now praise our God in heaven who gives food to all His creatures,"

No, said the old man, I will praise no other god except the one which my own fingers have made and he pointed to a little idol which he had taken with him.

Abraham grew very angry and said: Get out of my house at once! No sooner had the old man left, when God called unto Abraham and said: Where is the man that came to thee this night? "That man, "Abraham replied, was very obstinate and he refused to believe in Thee. I therefore grew angry and drove him out of the house."

Knowest Thou what thou hast done? asked God. Art thou aware that I have suffered this old man for many years, even though he denies Me? Yet, when he came to thee for but one night's shelter and but one meal, and aroused thy anger, thou drovest him out of thy house."

Abraham immediately ran to the wilderness, looked for the old

man, and when he found him, Abrham fell on his knees and said:  
~~spoke~~ "Forgive me for what I did to you tonight,  
for I know that I was wrong."

The day will come when this Jewish spirit of tolerance  
and love of mankind will communicate itself to the whole world --  
provided you work for that day. Then mankind will seek out the  
rejected and mistreated, then all doors will be opened and  
all hearts will be united, then Israel and the nations will  
stand together and rejoice in their fraternal unity.

