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What has the Jew Given to America?, 1920.

LECTURE BY RABBI ABBA H. SILVER, ON

"WHAT HAS THE JEW GIVEN TO AMERICA,"

AT THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY

29, 1920, CLEVELAND, OHIO.

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I shall speak briefly this morning, first, of what the Jew has given to America, secondly, of what Judaism has given to America, and, thirdly, of what America has given to the Jew. I want to dwell particularly upon what the Jew has given to America, because at this moment, when so much of the spirit of suspicion of the stranger and the immigrant in our midst is abroad in the land, men are frequently prone to catalogue the Jew among the most recent immigrants to America.

Very few non-Jews ever associate the Jew with the pioneer and the builder on the American continent; but in very truth the Jew was among the very first to set foot on the American continent, among the very first to labor upon these shores, among the very first to offer sacrifices in order to establish new institutions upon these shores. Long before the Pilgrim Fathers came to America the Jews were here; long before the English, or the Germans, or the Irish, or the French, and even the Dutch were on the Western hemisphere, the Jew was here.

I need not recount in detail just how much the Jew contributed to the very discovery of America. It is an established fact, but, unfortunately, far too little

popularized, that the very expedition of Columbus was made possible by Jews; that after the monarchs of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella, had given up the project completely, it was a Jew--Santangel--who spoke favorably and enthusiastically of Columbus, and the monarchs of Spain advanced the first seventeen thousand ducats to make the expedition possible. And it was to this Jew that Columbus sent his first complete report of his voyage to what he then thought was India.

And it was another Jew--Sanchez--that received the second report from Columbus, because he, too, was financially instrumental in making the expedition possible. It is a fact that the man who first sighted America was a Jew, and it is a fact that the first white man, the first European to have set foot on American soil was a Jew,-- Louis A. Duro. And it is a fact that the astronomical charts used by Columbus on the expedition were charts given to him by his friend, the Jew Abraham Zakota. And it is a fact that the surgeon on board ship was a Jew. And lately a suspicion has arisen in the minds of a good number of scholars and students that Columbus himself may have been a Jew. If that is so, our ties of friendship with our friends in the Knights of Columbus will be greatly strengthened.

It is also a fact that the second expedition of Columbus was made possible by the sacrifices of the Jew. When the Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 their property was confiscated, and the money realized on their property was definitely set aside to make possible the second

expedition of Columbus to the Western hemisphere. And it is one of the most marvelous co-incidents of history that the day on which Columbus set sail for America, August the 3rd, 1492, was exactly one day after the Jews were expelled from Spain,--on the 9th of Ab, the day of mourning for the destruction of the first temple, and also for the destruction of the second temple; and it is very likely that these exiles from Spain, the Jews who loved Spain so much, who had lived there for eight hundred years, on their way out from Barcelona saw the masts of the three ships that were to take Columbus to discover a new home for millions of their oppressed descendents.

Not only was the Jew present at the time of the discovery of America, but he was here when America, and more especially the United States, began to be colonized. Twenty years after the discovery of America, there was a Jewish settlement in some of the islands of the southern seas and in South America. Most of these immigrants were Spanish and Portuguese ,--secret Jews; because no Jew was ever permitted to come to any Spanish or Portuguese possession.

And not long thereafter the foul hand of religious intolerance reached unto the Western hemisphere, and the Inquisition was established, and America, too, began to boast of its records of Jewish martyrs who died for their faith. Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century there were inquisitions held in parts of Mexico and Peru, and in some of the islands of the Carribean; and one of the

most tragic was held in Lima, where fifty-eight Jews were burned at the stake.

In what is now the United States the Jews were among the very first to come. Thirty-four years after the Pilgrim Fathers reached these shores, a boatload of Jews, refugees from Brazil, came to New Amsterdam. This was in 1654. New Amsterdam was then a Dutch possession. Peter Stuyvesant, a religious bigot, at first refused to admit them, but when they petitioned back to Holland, where the Jews were large stockholders in the Dutch West India Company, and where the fact was known of the heroic part which the Jews played fighting the Portuguese in Brazil in behalf of the Dutch, word was sent back to Peter Stuyvesant to permit the Jews to settle in New Amsterdam. I wonder, if Peter Stuyvesant knew how many Jews would come to be in New York City, whether he would not have been even more strenuous in his opposition.

Four years thereafter a Jewish settlement was founded in Newport, and not long thereafter Jewish settlements were founded in Philadelphia, in Charleston, and in many other parts of the Atlantic seaboard. The colony of Georgia was founded in 1733, and in the month of July of that same year forty Jews settled in the colony of Georgia; and the first child born in Georgia was a Jewish child,-- Philip Minez.

So that the Jew was not absent when the great work of reconstruction began of founding a new republic on

this continent. In 1765 we find that among the signers of the non-Importation Resolution were the names of nine Jews. When the Revolutionary War broke out we find the Jews participating not only in the army but by financial aid, by most notable sacrifices for the sake of American independence. There were not many Jews in America during the Revolutionary War,--we estimate probably twenty-five hundred souls; yet in spite of that fact we have the names of twenty-seven Jewish officers who served in the army of George Washington. And one of the greatest financial aids of George Washington was a Jew by the name of Heym Soloman, a Polish Jew, who gave almost his entire wealth to the cause of the revolution, which at that time was passing through the great tragedy of Valley Forge. When it looked as though the entire world were about to collapse, when the cause of the revolution was in danger, Heym Soloman gave two hundred thousand dollars--all that he had--to bolster up the crumbling financial credit of the revolution.

In every war in which America found itself engaged the Jew played a part that was in no way inferior to that played by any other faith or denomination. The Jew figured creditably in the war of 1812; the Jew figured creditably in the war of 1848, and the Jew was present in a most remarkable manner in the Civil War. At the time of the Civil War there were perhaps one hundred and fifty thousand Jews in America, both in the North and in the South, and yet we have definite records of over seventy-five hundred that served in the armies of the North and the South; and

among them we find forty staff officers, nine generals, eighteen colonels, eight lieutenant-colonels, forty majors, two hundred and four captains, three hundred and twenty-five lieutenants, forty-eight adjutants and twenty-five surgeons.

In the war of 1898 we find close onto three thousand Jews volunteering in the service; and in the last and the greatest of wars, you know how heroically and how brilliantly the Jew has figured. The one hundred and fifty thousand Jews who fought in this war will remain as a perpetual monument of the Jews' loyalty and sacrificial devotion to America.

No, the Jew cannot be looked upon as an immigrant and a stranger in America; and the Jew cannot be regarded as one partaking of the gifts of America but giving nothing to it. And because of the fact that the Jew refuses to be tolerated, the freedom we have now we won by our toil and our labor, by pioneering, service and sacrifice. We owe it to no one. It was not a gift bestowed upon us, but something purchased by our blood.

And so we resent any attitude of tolerance, of patronage, of welcome, that is sometimes assumed by our non-Jewish friends. America is ours as it is of other peoples. It is part of our life and our soul, because we have given of our lives and of the precious gifts of our souls to make it. I dislike to see a Jew assuming the attitude of being super-grateful to other people for the things which he enjoys in this land, as though it was given to him

undeservedly. The Jew has given to America as much as any other racial or religious group has given.

But not only has the Jew given, but Judaism has given superbly to American ideals and to American life. There is another phase that is so little known. Do you realize how much of the spirit of the old testament, the literature of our people, informed the efforts of the earlier settlers upon this continent? Do you realize that the ideal commonwealth sought to be established upon these shores was derived from the old testament? Do you realize that the very names of the early settlers, the Pilgrim Fathers, were biblical names? That their speech was a biblical speech? That their very idiom of speech was the Hebrew idiom? Do you realize that the very life and atmosphere of the early commonwealths of America were saturated with the spirit of the old testament? And do you realize that when the struggle for independence began it was the old testament that was frequently called to bear evidence and testimony to the ~~sanatity~~ of independence?

A great historian once remarked that when the defenders of the divine rights of kings, of royal prerogatives, looked around for sacred arguments to endorse their positions, they went to the new testament--St. Paul's doctrine of sedition. But when the defenders of revolution and independence and human rights sought to find substantiation of their contentions, they went to the old testament. Also in the constant revolutions of the ancient Hebrews against

their kings, and more especially that classic reference to Samuel, when the Jews sought to make a king over them, Samuel told them not to, and only after insistence on the part of the people did he consent to annoint a king for them, saying, however, that the king was sent to them as a punishment for their sins.

The spirit of the old testament is the spirit of liberty and of freedom and the rights of individuals, and that is why that spirit pervaded the life of the earlier settlers and the revolutionary leaders and thinkers of America. Have you ever thought how closely the spirit of America is linked with the spirit of Judaism? Liberty, equality, fraternity,--these are American ideals. They are written large in the sacred documents of America, and yet they are essentially and fundamentally Jewish ideals--ideals which your fathers and mine preached unto the world three thousand years ago, and carried in the sanctuary of their souls right through the deserts of adversity and hostility for two thousand years.

When the revolutionary leaders of America sought to embody the ideal of independence and freedom and inscribe it upon the bell that was to toll forth the great message unto the farthestmost corners of the earth, they found that superb phrase, that completely expressed a new ideal that thrilled the soul of the American people, in the old testament -- "And ye shall proclaim freedom throughout the land and to all the inhabitants thereof."

It was the Jew who, in an age of serfdom and slavery, first declared, with the authority of divinity, "Men are my servants, God's servants, and not servants unto servants." And it was the Jew that first broke the shackles from off his hands in Judea and struck out across the desert to reach a promised land, where the rights of human beings were established and protected.

I venture to say that no land is so far advanced in its work for the establishment of human rights as is America. I venture to say that in no land are there as many splendid men and women who are engaged in social service, in giving of themselves to others, in bringing about a better, a sweeter and a happier state of things, than in our own land. And why? Because the spirit of the old testament is the spirit that is driving in American life; because the spirit of social justice, the spirit of the prophets of Israel, is that spirit which is pulsating and throbbing in the soul of America.

Equality of opportunity! We are not all equal. We are not equally endowed by nature, but we may all be equal before the law, and we may all be granted a relative equality of opportunity. Justice! That is the keynote of Jewish thought and Jewish prophecy. Justice! justice! shalt thou pursue! Thou shalt not oppress thy neighbor! Thou shalt not grind the face of the poor! Thou shalt not oppress the widow, and the orphan, and the fatherless, the weak, the slave, the stranger! That is the magna charta

of Judaism. And that is also the spirit of America.

And fraternity, brotherly love, the kinship of human beings, in spite of their racial and religious and national divergences and differences,--that was the spirit of the ancient Jew. Why, are we not all brothers? Hath not one God created us? Why, then, should we deal treacherously with one another? Are we not all brothers? And no land on God's earth tried to embody this wonderful ideal in law, in institution and in practice, than did this, our own land,--America.

We take them from the four corners of the earth, with all their ancient feuds and ancient scores crying for settlement, with all their antipathies and all their racial pretensions, and all their prejudices and animosities, and all their crusts and their hardened shells, and we fuse and blend them together by the heat of a common emotion and a common ideal. Here we established on a vast scale the truth that nations and peoples, and all the differences among groups of men, may be harmonised by one compelling hope and aspiration. We became the proving ground for the world; we became the microcosm, the little world of which the great world is the macrocosm, to establish the ancient ideal of Israel.

Are we not all brothers? Hath not one God created us all? And that is why I say the spirit of Israel and the spirit of America are so close to one another, so much akin. The Jew has given much to America;

Judaism has given much to America. But let us also remember in turn that America has given much to the Jew. America was the first land to remove all disabilities, all restrictions, all barriers against the Jew. America was the first land to say unto the Jew, as it said unto all peoples, "Come unto me all ye that are heavily oppressed, and I will give ye rest."

America took the Jew from the ghetto, from the filthy and crowded corners of Europe, poverty stricken and broken in spirit, haunted and hounded, and brought them to these gracious shores, blessed by God with plenty and prosperity, and took the stoop out of them and put the spirit into them, and made them proud, independent and prosperous men and women. We shall never forget our debt to America, that wonderful transformative power of America, that within ten or twenty years took a product of fifteen hundred years of exile, of fifteen hundred years of ghetto life, and the yellow badge, and the inquisition, and the blood accusations, and the pogrom, and the persecutions, and transfigured him into a dignified, proud human being. Why, that is a spiritual alchemy heretofore unknown in the history of the world. America was able to do it.

What are we going to do for America in the future? We are going to continue to work shoulder to shoulder with our non-Jewish friends--to serve, to serve and to serve the cause of America. We are going to give as we have given in the past, of our honest labor, of our effort,

of our enterprise and initiative, to this great land. We are going to give henceforth, as we have in the past, of our unstinted and undivided loyalty and self-consecration to the ideals of this great republic. We are going to give of our souls and our spirit.

Friends, please remember that what America asks of you is not that each of you become rich in possessions. You serve not the cause of America merely by gaining wealth and prosperity. What America asks of you, and what America asks of everyone, and what America needs, is that you give to it of your soul, of your love, of your thought, of your leadership, of your power for guidance, for helpfulness, for kindness, for service. At this moment of tremendous problems, of perplexing difficulties, America needs your thoughtful, sympathetic, loyal cooperation.

America needs a spirit of self-sacrifice. America is in danger because of the spirit of greed and acquisitiveness and selfishness, that you find in high places and in low. America needs today that same spirit of unselfishness and sacrifice which made America possible in the great, heroic days of long ago. And you can best serve this great land, that has given so much to you, by remembering that it is by spirit; that you can best serve America by love and by service.

We have never lost faith in America. Men today, in a moment of feverish nervousness, have come to be afraid of the freedom that is in America, and they have advocated

a spirit of repression and suppression and oppression,--a spirit of narrowing and confining. We are not afraid of the spirit of freedom. America has survived wars and civil strife, and panics and crises, and has emerged stronger and nobler because it is based on fundamental principles of eternal truth. It will pass through this period just as safely if we do not lose faith in America.

I believe that the greatest calamity that could come to the world would be if America were to let go of its historic prerogative, of its great destiny, to be the beacon light of the world, to be the great initiator of the world, to be the leader and the path-finder for humanity. The greatest calamity that can come to the world is if America were at this moment to take on the psychology of that menace which it destroyed in this great war; if it were to take on a spirit of narrow, incrustrated chauvinism, of an ego-centric, chauvinistic patriotism, of intolerance and narrowness and bigotry. That is the greatest menace that is facing America today.

Liberty is not our danger, and freedom is not our menace; but it is this spirit of reaction that would seek to make America like unto the nations of Europe,--the victims of reaction, the victims of cheap diplomacy, the victims of racial pretensions, of racial antipathies. That is the menace which confronts America today; and that is the duty of the Jew who knows the evils. Oh, how he knows the evils of chauvinism, of racial narrowness and bigotry! It

is the sacred duty of the Jew to stand guard for the principles of America.

Israel will move to a greater destiny, even as America will move to a greater destiny. Israel will profit from the greatness and the glory of America, even as Israel will give as it has given to the greatness and the glory of America.

The chosen people is in a chosen land, that has a chosen destiny in the world. Both the people of Israel and the American people will remain true to their mission and to their destiny. Amen.



7. Ultracraziness -
1. No Equality - two classes; wealth - least of wealth.
 2. Slavery - Parkinson - widening gap - 1 mill. in day & working in. To day 15,000. Ten papers then.
 3. No popular spirit - usual parties - no issue - political
 4. Inefficiency - 1 billion airplanes - no successful the man enters politics
 5. Not made for peace - just anarchy. Great + comes away ultra
 6. Unhonesty - to level down - Trade union scale.
 7. Art - per but seller. Religion - cure for thacke.
 8. Not made for brotherhood - help - 12 million
 9. Autocracy - Art - Suppression of free speech.

8 This 3 are not achievements but goals.

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quisition and exercises its
offices with as much fanatic-
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of an auto de fe.

Thomas Jefferson.

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