



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

Reel
146

Box
51

Folder
78

In Light and Love Shall Ye Lead (in honor of B'nai B'rith
Convention), 1920.

ADDRESS BY RABBI ABBA H. SILVER, ON
"IN LIGHT AND LOVE SHALL YE LEAD,"
SUNDAY, MAY 9th, 1920, AT THE TEMPLE,
EAST 55th STREET AND CENTRAL AVENUE,
CLEVELAND, OHIO.

It is with great pleasure that our community welcomes the friends and the delegates to the eleventh quinquennial convention of The Independent Order of B'nai Brith. Not only because the order of B'nai Birth has been and is the American Jewish fraternal organization par excellence, not only because of its fine achievements, its splendid philanthropic services in the past, but also, and more so, because of the fine spirit which informed all its endeavors in the past.

The symbol of B'nai Brithdom is the menorah--light; and the motive which actuated its labors is love. And in light and in love the B'nai Brith has led for over three-quarters of a century.

I like the organization especially because it is so true to the spirit of Israel. I believe there are no two words that adequately sum up the mission and purpose, the life and soul of Israel, as the words "light and love." "Light," which means truth, and "love", which means service. The God of Israel has always been a God of light and of love. "The Lord is my light." "God is

the Lord who showeth us light." "And God shall be unto them the * * * for an eternal light." The light that shines when all about is darkness; the light that warms when the winds of untoward circumstance blow icy cold * * *. The perpetual light, the radiant sun, from which all life and energy flow--that is God.

And God is love according to the faith of our people. God is in the world and of the world. God permeates the world with his love; God saturates it with his love. All things are of God--manifestations, radiations of his own dazzling omnipotence. For every sin there is forgiveness, for every failure there is ultimate triumph, for every weakness there is strength; at the turn of every road there is God. And out of this golden conviction that God is light and love our people have fashioned the menorah of light, the seven-branched candle stick, illuminating every department and every corner of human life.

The first of these branches of light is to be found in the religious ideals of Israel--light and love. Religion is not a matter of superstitions, or dreads, or fears,--fear of the unknown, fear of the future, fear of priests and priestcraft, and witchcraft, of soothsayers, and diviners, and dervishes, and fakirs. God is light and love, one all-embracing. And all that motley crew of men who prey, and spirits that victimize the soul of

man, that hold it enthralled ⁱⁿ ~~with~~ ^{thrall} the ~~thrill~~ of fear,
are relegated to the oblivion by the ideal of the faith
of Israel, the unity of God.

I sometimes think that our own age is drifting
again into a religion of superstition. When one looks
about him and sees the pathetic evidences of men and
women struggling, striving, seeking to penetrate the
veil of the future, to descend into the realms of death,
to listen to some intimations of those whom they loved
and lost; when one sees the unfortunate craving and yearn-
ing of men and women to stretch out their hands and touch
a reality which cannot be touched by the hands of men,
and see with the eyes the essence that cannot be seen
with the eyes of men, one begins to fear that our age is
drifting into an unwholesome mysticism, into a religion
of fears and dreads and superstitions.

One does not censure it, one does not criticise
this weakness of our age. One sympathetically understands
it. It is nursed by sorrow and bereavement; it is kept
alive by suffering; it is the result of the pathetic in-
quisitiveness of the children of men. But religion must
remain light and truth, ~~and~~ love and service, and it
must not be anything else. Our faith says to men and women:
"The heavens belong unto God, the earth He gave to the
children of men." The future belongs to God, the past
and the present belong to men. Do not fret concerning
the future; we are blessed because we know it not. "No

one can know the future and live." To know the purpose of existence, to know of the things that are to be, is to become the prey of a fatalism that would deaden every ambition and every aspiration of our lives.

Do not fret concerning the future, and do not consult the wood and the sticks and the rods concerning the future. Think rather of the past; think of the long road that you and I and your ancestors and mine have traveled for centuries, and of the many obstacles they have overcome. Think rather of the present, of God's great goodness, of the sunshine and the music that fill the world, of friends and flowers, of devotion and sacrifice, of dreams and visions, of heaven and heavenly aspirations; and then, kneeling before the great unknown, worship, in love and faith, Him whose glory is unknown to us, but whose presence is manifest to us in every noble impulse of our mortal days.

Ah, brother of mine, when you are lost amidst the doubts and perplexities of life, when the shadows of life fall like autumn leaves upon the highway of your life, when you are in doubt, not knowing whether the shadow is the substance or the light, when you are heartbroken over the loss of one that is near and dear to you, when your hopes lie in wreckage around you, come with me into the ^{quiet} sanctuary of our souls and let us stir ^{slumbering} the embers of memory, and in ^{them} the ~~glowing~~ embers of ^{glowing} memory let us find the intimations of God's kindness and

love.

Do you remember, brother of mine, God smiling through the loving eyes of your mother, as she nestled you close to her bosom? Are you minded of the day that God walked by your side through the fields, thrilling you with an estacy of longing for the far away, unlimited stretches of life? Do you recall the day when God spoke to you as you stood on the threshold of manhood, challenging you to duty, to life and to responsibility? Do you remember the touch of the fingers of God upon you as you placed the kiss of consecration upon her who is now the strength and the hope of your life? Do you remember those divine, gracious influences?

And you who have seen God in the sweetness of childhood, in the passion of hope, in the strength of labor, in the inspiration of *love*, --are you afraid of tomorrow? The God who was with you in the past, who is with you now, will be with you in the days to come. While His ways are unknown, rest assured that His ways are ways of pleasantness, and all His paths are peace.

I wish that men and women today could take this all-transfiguring faith in a God who is with them now, and will be with them in the days to come, when they shall *have found* ~~seek~~ the peace and the quiet of the grave, a faith *permeated by* ~~that has~~ the spirit of eternal light, ~~of God, a spirit~~

of eternal light that cannot die, that is immortal and
suffice themselves with such a faith, and not stoop to
~~the small and the petty and the primitive and the ugly.~~
is fight - ~~superstitious~~ *God is love. And God is true.* *God*

Religion, said Judaism, is ~~that~~ *not* sacrifice and
ritual and act, ~~to~~ *but* loving service, and ~~a~~ holy intent.

"God needs the heart of man." Not so much his act, not
so much the profession of his lips, but the heart. ¹

recall
I remember a beautiful story told of one of
the great mystics of the eighteenth century, Israel
Ben Eliezer, ~~to illustrate the~~ *which* attitude of our faith,
~~and its concept of true religion.~~ It was a Yom Kippur
day in the synagogue, and all the Jews ~~of the city~~
were assembled in prayer on the great ~~offering~~ *glorious* day of
the year. Suddenly an ignorant rustic from the province
came into the synagogue. He was lost among the learned
men assembled in the synagogue. He had never had the
opportunity of study; he didn't know the Torah, and he
didn't know the Talmud. He didn't even know how to
pray. And the people looked at him, ~~arrayed~~ *looked* in his
rustic garb, and silently mocked him. But the ~~poor~~ *soul & the* rustic
~~soul~~ *longed* wanted to pray. He had drunk the cup of life to
its very bitter dregs. His life was full of sorrow.
He wanted to pray, but knew not how. Suddenly ~~a~~ *The accumulated* great ~~sob~~ *years*
soul-racking sob, that shook his entire frame, ~~arose~~ *from his lips*
~~from his heart~~, and then he left the synagogue. ~~And~~ *from* The
great Zadik, who stood absorbed in prayer, suddenly ~~called~~ *cried*

aloud, "Who was that man?" And the worshipers told him, "Why, just an ignorant Jew from the province. He does not even know how to pray." And the Zadik turned to the congregation and said, "Children, that man's sob has ^{from the clouds} rent the veil ~~of the temple~~, and his cry has come ^{before} to the throne of God Almighty, while our prayers are still knocking in vain upon the gates of heaven."

That inarticulate longing of the soul for communion with God, that religion which means ^{ineffable} a love ~~and~~ ^{which prompts us} a love ~~for riveting our soul with the soul of the universe,~~ not so much ^{to love} of losing ourselves in God, but ^{to find} of finding ourselves in God,--that was the religion of Israel.

It was light and love in another department, ~~another branch of the menorah~~ in the economic life of men. Judaism preached light and love in the economic relations of men. "Justice shalt thou pursue." God is the God of justice, the God of the widow, and the fatherless, and the oppressed, and the denied, and the enslaved of the world. And Judaism preached light and love in the social relations of men. In the eyes of God there is no master and servant, no king and subject, no privileged classes, and no dispossessed classes. Education, and culture, and refinement, and beauty of body, and achievements of hand, and facility of mind are privileges bestowed by a beneficent Maker, which must be paid for in added duties and in increased responsibilities. "Men are My servants, and not servants unto servants." God alone is ruler and king, and all men

are his children.^A

And Judaism brought light and love into the political relations of men. Do you know why, when in the seventeenth century the peoples of Europe began to challenge the divine rights of kings, they went to the Old Testament for their sanction? And why the upholders of divine rights and absolute submission to the authority of royalty went to the New Testament for their authority and sanction?

I will tell you why. Listen to this, of the *Epistle*
To the
~~Book of~~ Romans;-- the advice given to the members of the church:

"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.

Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil works. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same. For the king is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath but also for conscience sake.

For for this cause pay ye tribute also; for they are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing. * * *

Now, listen to this attitude of the Jew to kings and kingly prerogatives. The children of Israel are asking of Samuel a king to rule over them.

"And all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel and said unto him, 'Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in they ways. Now, make us a king to judge us like all the other nations.'

"But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to judge over us.' And Samuel prayed unto the Lord.

"But the Lord said unto Samuel, 'Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me.'"

The demand on the part of the people for a king was in direct violation of the will of God himself.

"Now, therefore, sayeth the Lord, 'Give them a king, but warn them in advance what kingship will mean unto them. This is the manner of the king that will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots; he will take your daughters to be confectionaries and cooks and bakers; he will take your fields and your vineyards and your olive yards; and he will take the tenth of your seed and

of
your vineyards, and he will make you manservants and
maidservants, and your goodliest young men he will take
unto himself and put into his work. And he will take
the tenth of your sheep, and ye shall cry out in that
day because of your king which ye have chosen. But the
Lord will not hearken unto you."

I believe it was Oscar Straus, in his very
fine book on "The Origin of Republican Form of Govern-
ment," that makes ~~this~~ ^{the} very interesting statement: that
through the window of the old puritan churches in New
England, the new West looked for guidance to the old
East. And the reason why the colonies chose the republi-
can form of government, when they overthrew the power
of English tyranny, was because they were saturated
with the ideals of the early commonwealth of the Hebrews,
because the spirit of Hebraic democracy guided and in-
formed the leaders and the preachers, who were the
leaders in those days. And the first absolutely free
colony was founded by Roger Williams in 1636, and they
organized their form of government, and adopted a code
of laws to guide them. They stated in their preamble
that it was an imitation of the form of government which
existed for a time among the Jews.

Light and love in the political relations of
men; light and love in the relations of man to man. It
was the Jew that preached the ideal of human brotherhood.

"Are we not all brothers? Hath not one God created us all?" And it was a Dutch Jew, Spinoza, who first proclaimed in immortal words the doctrine of absolute and complete toleration among men, and it was his voice that ultimately carried the spark of fire that set aflame the souls of men calling for a greater unity and a closer contact among the children of men.

And light and love also among ~~the~~ nations. It was the Jew that preached the ideal of universal concord and peace when all the world was struggling and ~~cloying~~ ^{clawing} for material possession and ~~political~~ ^{territorial} aggrandizement. It was the prophet of Israel, in the ecstasy of his great love for the children of men, that visioned the day when all shall be peace, when all shall know God, and in the knowledge of God, of light and of love, ~~will~~ ^{would} fashion their tools of destruction into implements of construction.

And it was the Jew who taught light and love in charity, in philanthropy. It was the Jew who first denounced the ~~type of~~ charity that is selfish, the type of charity that uses the misfortune of one's brother for the sake of gaining personal salvation; the ~~type~~ ^{charity} of one who exploits and robs and walks roughshod over the rights of men and women--unscrupulous, greedy, lustful, grasping,--and then in the twilight hours of his life, when things are slipping from him, ~~he~~ bequeaths a pittance

to salve his conscience or the conscience of his family.

Charity is love, ^{It is not charity to wait} ~~not for waiting~~ until one's

brothers and sisters come, torn, tortured and bleeding to

one's threshold, begging for alms, ^{It is charity to go} ~~but charity that~~

~~goes~~ out into the great world, into the highways and the

byways, seeking one's brothers and ~~one's~~ sisters, and

^{give} ~~giving~~ to them not of coins, ~~and not of coppers, and not~~ ^{nor}

of things, but ~~giving to them~~ of one's very soul, of

one's very love, of one's very self. ^{TP} ~~That is~~ ^{there is} the faith

of Israel--one glorious menorah of seven branches,

illuminating every department of human life.

I ^{said} ~~say~~ that the spirit of your fine Order is so much akin to the spirit of Israel. It has striven to keep alive the faith of our people in the hearts of our people. It has tried to be true to its ideals of justice, of equality, of democracy. It has realized, as few organizations realize, the real meaning and purpose of philanthropy. Its many institutions of love are evidence of the fact that it has grasped the truth embodied in the faith of our people. It has taught love and it has sought light. It has known the meaning of harmony,--brotherhood.

We are told of this beautiful menorah that was in the sanctuary of the Lord, that ^{it} was fashioned out of one solid block of gold; seven branches, but all uniting ^{ed} in ~~the~~ essence and substance ~~of them~~, all forged and

fashioned out of one mass. And so is life, and so is the world. One man may have one conviction, and another man may have another conviction. One may be orthodox, and one may be an atheist; one may be conservative in economic theories, and another may be radical; one may have one ~~view~~ ^{view} and another another ~~view~~ ^{view}. But so long as all the stems move down to one base--light and love, service and sacrifice--so long can there be real harmony among the children of men.

May God bless the work of this organization.

When it began seventy-seven years ago, Israel was a handful in this land. Today, by the grace of God, it has grown to ~~many~~ ^{mighty} in numbers--more than three millions. New problems ~~are being threshed out~~ ^{have been thrust forward}, new conditions have arisen. Perhaps your organization will be asked to broaden its scope, to identify itself with new activities which the moment and the occasion necessitate. But as long as it will remain true to its fine ideals, it will be a blessing to the world. ^{IP} Oh, how the world today needs light and love! We talk of institutions, we talk of legislations, we talk of treaties, we talk of leagues of nations, but I tell you man and women the regeneration of society will be brought about not by deed, not by laws, and not by enactments, and not by tribunals; the regeneration of society will be brought about through the purification of the souls of men,

through the refinement of their passions and their sentiments, through the ennobling of their ideals.

The real salvation of humanity will be found only when each man and each woman, in and by himself or herself, learns that God is love, ~~and that life is worth while.~~ ^{love} Only as long as our entire soul is ~~saturated do we love.~~ ^{we} As long as ~~they will~~ ^{do we} fail to realize that only as we give unto others ~~and~~ take from others inspiration for ourselves, as long as we ~~destroy~~ ^{fail to} the shackles of greed and selfishness, and reach out ^{To} ~~the tenacles of our minds and souls to catch~~ ^{embrace in love} the multitudes of men and women, who need us and whom we need, so long will the selfish world ^{is} move on to ^{to} ultimate damnation.

What the world needs today is a revival of religion, not a revival of superstitions, not a revival of spiritualisms, not ^{N B} a miracle-mongering, not a seeking after a healing of this ~~element~~ ^{ailment} or of that ~~element~~ ^{ailment}; what the world needs today is a seeking for a healing of the bruised and the starved soul of man, that soul that has been steeped in the mire, in the very cesspool of hate and greed and passions and animosity for five ~~fretful~~ ^{terrible} years. The world needs a spiritual bath; the world needs a purging through the undying love of God indwelling in the souls of men.

As long as your organization, among the many
others, will continue to remain true to its ideals-- *Benevolence*
brotherly love, ^{and} harmony, ~~beneficence, light and love--~~
so long will it continue to be a blessing to the
household of Israel, and a blessing to humanity.

