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My People, 1922.

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LECTURE BY RABBI ABBA H. SILVER,

SUBJECT: MY PEOPLE.

AT THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING,

MAY 28th, 1922 - CLEVELAND, O.

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WRHS

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES



JOSEPH T. KRAUS  
Shorthand  
Reporter  
CLEVELAND



I believe that it is altogether proper at the conclusion of the year, at the end of a series of lectures touching upon a variety of things, that we devote the concluding lecture to what may be a summary of the salient facts concerning the life, the problems, the destiny of your people and my people; and as I speak this morning I would not like to have you think of me as of a chauvenist. I am not a chauvenist. I do not condone the deficiencies and the shortcomings of my race, and I do not exalt it beyond its just desert. I believe chauvenism is contrary to the spirit and the tradition of our race. I do not know of a people that is so self-analytical, that is so critical of itself, introspective to the point of morbidity oftentimes, as is your people and my people.

And certainly no prophet of our race ever indulged the people; the seers and the sages and the rabbis and the prophets of our people loved Israel; they were true and loyal sons of Israel, but they loved it with a love that cleanses and purges, that oftentimes hurt because of the rigors of the discipline which it exacts, and never pampers and never indulges the people.

I know the deficiencies of my race, and I oftentimes attacked them, but I do so, I hope, in a spirit of comprehension and sympathy, for actions must be measured in relation to the depth of the circumstances from which

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they spring. You must understand the root of an act, the seed of an act, to judge it rightly, and because I know and understand I can be sympathetic. The marvel to me is not that our people has this flaw or that flaw; the almost miraculous thing to me is that our people has so few radical, vital deficiencies. I believe that was born from <sup>lost</sup> contact with the soil for two thousand years; from contact with the stablizing, balancing, normalizing influences of the soil, of the agricultural life.

A people that was driven into cities, and into the lowest, noisesome and pestilential sections of those cities, and then caged in as beasts in quarters, in ghettos; a people that was driven out from the multitudinous occupations in which people may engaged and forced into a few, and those few not of the kind that develop character; a people that was subjected continuously for fifteen centuries to all the cruel devices that the cunning of vindictive men could think of--devices calculated to break their spirit, to destroy their manhood, to make of them outcasts, Pariahs, gypsies; I say, the marvel <sup>not</sup> of it is, that we have one weakness or another, but that we have succeeded, in spite of this organized, studied hostility of fifteen hundred years, in preserving so much of the inner glory and grandeur of our character, of our life.

I am not a chauvenist. Other races that

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may have achieved great things in the world have always attributed those achievements to their own natural gifts and capacities. The Greeks did that, the Romans did that, and the Prussians do it now, and the Anglo-Saxon is launched upon such a delusion at the present day. But the prophets of our race and the spokesmen of our people have never permitted the race to indulge in any such fatuous illusions. That Israel produced great things is not to be attributed to Israel's natural excellencies, but simply to the fact that a great God selected that people to be the vehicle for His revelation.

"You are no different to me," says God to Israel, "than the ~~Cutheans~~. I brought you out of Israel, it is true, but I brought the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir.

You are all alike to me, and every race serves a specific purpose of mine."

Israel can no more pride itself upon its achievements than the great artist, who becomes the channel through which the divine efflatus, the divine inspiration, pours, can pride himself upon his achievements. We are all tools in the hands of an omnipotent power, and some are chosen to carry a greater measure of beneficence and glory than others.

But whether my people is perfect or imperfect, whether it is flawless or full of flaws, whether it

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is good or bad, it is my people; and I would no more think of denying it or deserting it or despising it because of its weaknesses than I, or you, would think of despising our kith and kin if perchance they do not happen to have that refinement or that culture that we would like them to have. To despise one's own is to despise oneself; and to be ashamed of one's own is to confess the lowest moral degradation and spiritual debauche.

I mean to chastise my people when they follow strange gods, but I love them, and I am proud, and so are you, to be able to repeat with those who tramped the weary centuries and the dark night, with those who worshipped in caves and in secret hiding places, with those who carried upon their shoulders the badge of infamy and of sublimity, with those who ascended the scaffold and the autodafe, with those who faced the oncoming mobs of the Crusader,--I say, I am proud to be able to repeat with them: "In spite of all these things Thy name we have not forgotten."

My love of my people I would not have you think is based on pity. My pride in it is not only because of its heroic suffering. I think it is a sign of a neurosis when a people seeks refuge in suffering. The sick and the martyrs have a claim upon us simply because of their sickness and of their martyrdom, irrespective of the cause of their sickness or the reason of their martyrdom.

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That is the tyranny of the sick and of the saints and of the martyrs.

But my people does not exert that tyranny upon me. It is not only not suffering. Other peoples have suffered; suffering is a very commonplace thing in the world for individuals and for peoples. It is because of the unique character of its suffering that I love it. It is because its suffering was self-imposed, voluntary and vicarious; it is because its suffering was sacrificial and atonement for the sins of others; it is because it suffered so that other peoples may say of him: "Verily, he bears our illness and he suffers for our wickedness." It is because he chose to die that others might live, it is because he chose to perpetuate with his tears and his suffering the glory of the kingdom of God, that that suffering becomes an object of pride. When suffering becomes a sacrament then it becomes majestic.

But even apart from this tragic grandeur and this majestic scope of my people's suffering, its veritable achievements make me proud of my people. There are a few convictions that I hold that have for me the potency of a creed, and one of these convictions which gives purpose and meaning to my life and labor, and to that of every Jew, is this: that the Jew as a Jew has benefitted mankind, and that the world needs the Jew as a Jew.

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When that wanderer from the little city of Ur of the Chaldees, slumbering in the delta of the Euphrates, left his home, his kith and kin, his friends, his comforts, and when he asked of the God that troubled him, that urged him on in the wilderness to seek a new land, "Wherefore and why? Why need I now become an exile and a wanderer upon the face of the earth"? - God said to unto him: "That all the nations of the earth may become blessed through thee and through thy seeking."

And I believe that our people has remained true to that charge. I haven't in mind now the individual achievements of individual Jews in the realms of art and science and literature now and in the days gone by. They have given abundantly, these gifted sons and daughters of Israel, to the cause of the advancement of mankind in every land and in every age. I haven't in mind the achievements of our people as a people--and as a people we have abundantly blessed mankind; as a people we shattered the idols of the world in order to enthrone the one God; as a people we looked above and saw God, and we looked below and saw suffering mankind, and we taught mankind to look above. "Leave up thine eyes and see." And we prayed to God to look down. "Look down from heaven and see." And we brought God and the suffering mankind together in the unity of father and son. We <sup>welded</sup> grew religion and morality into one inseparable union; and we gave unto the world the

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Heavenly Father.

As a people we saw hate rampant, peoples suspicious of one another, seeking one another's undoing, and we said unto them: "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created all? Why, then, should we deal treacherously with one another?" As a people we saw war and bloodshed and the blind struggle of races and nations, and we projected a vision to the world, the day when they shall beat their swords into plowshares. "Peace be unto those who are weary and unto those who are afar off."

And as a people Israel, my people and your people, saw oppression and injustice, the weak wronged; we saw the millions that were submerged and denied, and in shackles and in slavery, and we cried aloud for freedom, for the opening of the doors of the dungeons, for the going forth of all who are imprisoned and incarcerated,-- for justice and truth and equality and freedom. "Justice, justice shalt thou pursue!" And that became the burning passion of this mighty people.

And as a people we became the great heretics of the world, because as a people we denied the divinity of one man in order to assert the divinity of all men. And because of these achievements of my people we won many friends and we won many enemies. And do you know who are the friends of my people? The friends of my people are all those who, in every corner of the world today, are

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fighting for these things. Wherever there is a freedom loving son or daughter of the human race, wherever there are liberals, wherever there are men who believe in progress and advancement, there are the friends of my people, whether it be the Puritan who began his struggle two hundred years ago, singing the psalms of my people and building in a new world a commonwealth based on the morality and the ethics of my people; whether it be the champions of the French revolution, or those of the German or the Austrian or the Russian revolutions,--wherever there are peoples who wish to break chains, there are the friends of my people.

A people whose God could say unto them, "Ye are my servants but not servants unto servants, for unto me belongs the world,"--a people such as that is the friend and the plighted kinsman of every man who loves freedom. Wherever there is a liberal in the world, my friends, who needs comfort and inspiration in his heart's struggle, why, all he does is to look upon this little people--"For you are but few"--this challenging and protestant minority that has defied the overwhelming majority of the earth for centuries, and who, in spite of untoward circumstances and machination of peoples, has endured, and he finds in Israel the symbol of truth triumphant, of truth crushed to the ground rising again, and out of Israel and its history and its experience, he

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draws inspiration for his own work and his own trials.

And do you know who are the enemies of my people? Wherever there are ghouls in the night; wherever there are those who prefer the Stygian gloom of medievalism, wherever there are the intrenched and the privileged classes who live on the exploitation of their fellowmen,--dynasty, privilege, aristocracy, political or economic, there you have the sworn enemies of your people and my people. When one comes to the United States to begin a campaign of propaganda to restore the Romanoff, the blood-stained Romanoff dynasty, what is his first attack? An anti-Jewish propaganda. When these hooded ghouls of the night spread over this land the bedraggled tales of medievalism, that vileness which the war has spewed forth, they, too, are the enemies of your people and my people; wherever there are people who hate the prophet and who hate prophecy, who cry "The spiritual man is mad and a menace"--there you will find the enemies of your race.

But these enemies we know how to meet. We have developed through the years a strategy, a defense, they have never succeeded in downing. On the contrary, persecution and opposition and ostracism steels us and strengthens us and makes us more determined; but it is the enemies within - "the destroyers who come from within you" - or from within ourselves that are the real menacing enemies of our people.

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And who are they? There are just two classes of them; one is the Jew who has lost his vision, the Jew who has sold his birthright for a pottage of lentils, the Jew who has lost his soul in the passion for acquisitiveness, the Jew who has become traitor to the vision which sustained and preserved our people, the Jew who has dethroned God and enthroned wealth, money and pleasures--the predatory Jew, the materialistic Jew. He is not alone a menace to Israel, but he is a veritable menace to the whole of the human race, because there is no materialist so loathsome and so destructive and dangerous as a Jewish materialist.

The enemy of our race from within is the man who has forgotten that the keynote of Jewish life is not to amass and to hold, but to give and to sacrifice. "The world does not exist but for the sake of the sacrifices," said one of our rabbis. Why, when your forefathers and mine lived in want and uncertainty, in penury in the hated and dirty ghettos, they were able still to dream, to dream of "the city of universal peace," to dream of a "kingdom of God." They could still look up and look beyond; they had dreams, they had visions, and they lived by the light of their vision.

But so many of us in this age of freedom and prosperity have become choked in the obesity of plenty, and we have lost the gift, the one holy gift of our race--that



of being able to dream and to project visions that would astonish mankind. The tragedy of it all is that our children are growing up obsessed by the same unJewish, anti-Jewish, anti-social passion for things, for money, for dress, for wealth, for position! But the glory of life's sanctity, the beauty, the ideals, the enthusiasm to go out into the highways and byways of life to serve and give and help--that is fast passing out from the lives of the children of my people.

They are the enemies of Israel; and one other class and I shall be through. The enemies of my people are the terrified Jews, the weasel Jews, those who are Jews by sufferance, those who feel the burden and not the glory, and those who would seek back doors out and who haven't the courage openly to acknowledge defeat and suffer it. Somewhere from among that group of terrified Jews comes the clamor: "The world does not like the Jew, the world does not like the name 'Jew'. It is rather unpleasant to carry around with one--the title of Jew; let's change it; let's call ourselves by a different name; perhaps we can fool people." Weasel Jews!

Why should I change my name? - a name drenched in the tears and the blood of a race, a badge of sacrificial idealism. Change it because, forsooth, some blind and stupid or malicious creature does not like the sound of it? I suppose the Quakers, that band of



sacrificing, serving, holy servants of God, when they began their ministry of compassion and mercy in the world, and people derided them and mocked them and jeered at them and called them in contempt "Quaker," they could have said to themselves: "Let's change our name; perhaps people might forget about us." But no, they hung onto their service and to their name until today the name "Quaker" is a name not of reproach or contempt but of dignity, of beauty.

Surrender my name? Ah, no. When mine enemy says "Jew," I say, "Aye, Jew!" and I shall continue to say Jew and the children of my people shall continue to say Jew until that day "when God is one and His name is one." My people, slaves of a deathless vision, masters of an ancient wisdom! My people, dreamers from Chaldea and Galilee, dreamers lost in the sorry traffic of Rome and London, hostages alike of God and men! My people, prophets praised but never loved, crucified but worshipped on the cross!

My people, the risen people of an immemorial crucifixion, in their hearts the promptings of an ancient splendor, in their blood the rythm of a mighty song, and in their hand a torch! My people! God, what a heritage, what a burden, and what a glory!

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# THE TEMPLE BULLETIN

THE TEMPLE  
East 55th and Central Avenue  
Abba Hillel Silver, Rabbi

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SUNDAY, MAY 28TH, 1922

10:30 A. M.

RABBI SILVER

will speak on

## MY PEOPLE

Who Are Its Friends  
Who Are Its Enemies

**This will be the last Sermon  
and the final Sunday Morning  
Service for the Season.**

SHAVUOTH AND CONFIRMATION

Friday, June 2nd, at 9:30 A. M.



## SHAVUOTH AND CONFIRMATION SERVICE

FRIDAY, JUNE 2nd at 9:30 A. M.

Rabbi Silver will confirm a Class of 106,  
64 girls and 42 boys,  
the largest in the history of The Temple.

The Temple doors will be opened at 9 A. M.  
They will be closed at 9:50 A. M.

### Seats for Confirmation

AISLE SEATS will be reserved for and cards issued to parents of the Confirmants. A sufficient number of seats will be reserved for the boys and girls of the Confirmation Class.

NO SEATS will be reserved for Temple members, but every effort will be made to accommodate members, and in order to give them *the first right* to unreserved seats, Cards of Admission are enclosed with this Bulletin. These Cards do not reserve any seats and do not guarantee that any seats will be available.

The Admission Cards should be presented to the Usher at the door.

### Close of Sunday Services

With the Sunday Morning Service of May 28th, there will be no further Sunday Services until Fall.

### Friday Evening Services begin June 9th

Beginning Friday evening, June 9th, and continuing throughout the summer, Friday Evening Service will be conducted at the East End Extension, at 8:00 o'clock.

Rabbi Silver will conduct the Service as long as he remains in the city. During Rabbi Silver's absence, Rabbi Stern, a 1922 graduate of the Hebrew Union College, will conduct the Service.

### No Session of Community Sewing on May 30th

There will be no meeting of the Community Sewing and Quilting Circles on Tuesday, May 30th, on account of Decoration Day. Tuesday, June 6th, will be the last session for this season, PROVIDED everybody attends. Otherwise, it will be necessary to hold an additional meeting or two for the purpose of clearing up all unfinished, important work. Please, come and help on Tuesday, June 6th.



## THE TEMPLE ANNUAL MEETING AND DINNER

At the Statler Hotel

SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 28th, at 6:30

Dinner at 6:30

Annual meeting at 8 o'clock

Dancing will follow the Meeting

### RABBI SILVER WILL BE THE SPEAKER OF THE EVENING

Rosentral's Orchestra will play during the Dinner and for the Dancing at the close of the Meeting.

Every Family of The Temple should be represented at the Dinner and Meeting.

**If You have not yet Reserved Your Places Telephone  
The Temple (Randolph 1330) at Once**

The Temple Alumni are cordially invited to participate in the Dancing which follows the Meeting.

### The Choir Program for Sunday

Anthem—"And the Lord Said".....Woodman  
Bass Solo—"Blow Ye the Trumpet".....Andrews  
Anthem—"Sing Unto the Lord".....Wilkinson

Organ Prelude—10:15 A. M.

Mr. Bullis will play

"Springtime Sketch".....Brewer  
"Vision".....Rheinberger

### The Religious School Record for May 21st

Number of pupils belonging .....981  
Number present .....938  
Average attendance .....96%  
The following Twelve Classes were on the Honor Roll for Perfect Attendance: 1A-Miss Mendelsohn; 2A-Miss S. Lederer; 4D-Miss Handler; 5A-Miss August; 5B-Miss Spero; 5C-Miss Jaffe; 5D-Miss Friedman; 6C-Miss Rapurt; 6D-Miss Gimp; 7A-Mrs. Wolf; 8A-Mrs. Wolf; 9A-Miss Schott.

### Examinations for 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th Grades

All pupils of the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grades of the Religious School will be given examination for promotion on Sunday, May 28th, during the regular session hours. Every pupil in the above divisions is expected to be present and take the examination.



## **The Rally and Closing Exercises of the Religious School**

Will be held on Sunday, June 11th, at ten o'clock. All the Classes of both Morning and Afternoon Divisions will take part in the Exercises. Certificates of Honor for Perfect Attendance and Scholarship will be distributed.

## **Hebrew Classes will Hold Rally**

The annual Rally and Closing Exercises of the Hebrew Classes will take place on Saturday morning, June 10th, at 10:30. Parents and friends are invited to be present.

## **The Temple Junior Orchestra**

The Sixth Annual Concert of The Temple Junior Orchestra was given last Sunday evening with marked success before an audience, which completely filled The Temple. The confidence with which the children played and the really fine program they presented, evidenced the careful practicing they have done under the very capable leadership of Mr. Carl Dueringer. The year's work reflects great credit upon the young musicians and their director.

## **Flowers for the Altar**

Contributions to the Altar Fund have been received as follows:

<i>Given by</i>	<i>In Memory of</i>
Mrs. Simon Klein .....	Her Parents, Alexander and Henriette Reiter.
Mrs. Herman Kohn .....	Her Daughter, Gertrude Kohn Haas
Mrs. Ella Gugenheim .....	Her Husband
Mrs. M. Diamond and Mrs. Saul Levine.....	Their Mother, Mrs. Rose Blumenthal.