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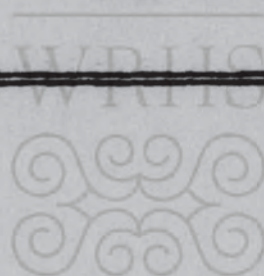
Everyman - Everyday, 1924.

"EVERYMAN - EVERYDAY."

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING

MAY 11, 1924, CLEVELAND, O.



JOSEPH T. KRAUS
Shorthand
Reporter
CLEVELAND

The observance of Mothers Day is in itself a beautiful practice. Mothers Day turns our thoughts kindly to the world of our childhood, the world of sunny illusions and glamour in which we lived during the dawn of our lives under the protecting love of motherhood. On Mothers Day we wander back along the avenues of memory and association to the beginnings of things, to the days when life was wondrously new and fresh, when every new experience came to us with a tang of novelty, when a new revelation waited for us at the turn of the road, when all our hopes and all our fears were intense and magnified, and strangely real and vivid, and when all our life revolved and hummed and busied itself round the one radiant center--Mother!

I think that man is blessed indeed, who eagerly goes back to his childhood, sure to find there pleasant memories, love, warmth, and those tender intimacies which follow one like a halo right through life. And blessed is that mother to whose dream-world her children return, gladly, eagerly, sure to find there a saintly, incense-wreathed, unforgettable shrine of love.

I think Mothers Day is beautiful, too, because it enables us to add a tribute to our mothers in spoken words and in visible acts while they are yet alive. You know that in the furious rush of our daily lives and in our deep-rutted habits of conduct, all of us, even the most

thoughtful of us, are prone to take our blessings for granted, and our privileges as a matter of course. We assume that our dear ones know that we would love for them and care for them and wish them well, and yet our dear ones may not be as busily occupied with the concerns of life; they may have their long days, their empty days, their days of longing and waiting; life may be very trying, and their days may be very troubled for them, and one word of love spoken freely, frankly; one emotion expressed, an emotion that wells up spontaneously out of an overwhelming adoration, would come to them, if we but knew it, as a healing balm, soothing, comforting, strengthening.

And then I think, too, that Mothers Day is beautiful because it enables us to pay our need of reverence and our tribute of love to our mothers who may no longer be with us. Across the great divide on such a day we reach out after them; we send our longings to them, to where they are in the dwelling place of light, from where they watch over us lest our feet stumble against the stones. For a mother's love and a mother's faith never dies. And just by thinking of them we summon them back, and they come to dwell in our lives as of old, as if they had never gone.

I think there is no surer proof of immortality, there is no stronger evidence of the deathlessness of the spirit, than the love of parents, for long after their poor and tired bodies have sought and found the peace of the grave, they are with us, by us, in us, over us, always.

And so I say beautiful is this observance of Mothers Day. But it should be remembered that Mothers Day is a symbol, and like all symbols, it is meant not for the occasion only but for all times. A symbol is a vivid, a dramatic act which reminds men of ideas and duties which must hold true all the days of their lives. It is quite evident that a man who thinks of his mother or of his father on Mothers Day and Fathers Day only, has lost the very meaning and purpose of Mothers Day.

This day, if I interpret it aright, is meant to turn the hearts of the children to the parents, and the hearts of the parents to the children; to call to our attention the duties and the responsibilities and the privileges of that indivisible unit of the race, the ultimate stronghold of the human race--the family; to draw us together in stronger family allegiance and family loyalty; to foster and nourish the true affections which make life beautiful because they build and sustain the sanctuary of life, which is the home.

I believe that no finer conception of the family life and of the home was ever evolved than that which our people, the people of Israel, evolved. When the Jew spoke of "the purity of family life," which was the keystone of his national existence, he had in mind more than holiness in relationship, more than mutual respect and mutual helpfulness--he had in mind also the everlasting loyalty which makes a home, and the unimpeachable personal

contact of every member of a household which sustains a home. The sacred union of man and woman to build a household in Israel was attested with the seal of God himself, according to the sages of old. In the beginning of things, said one of our rabbis, God created man out of dust, and woman out of man, but thereafter God created both man and woman "in His image." So that from that time on man's life is incomplete without woman's, and woman's life is incomplete without man's, and both their lives remain forever incomplete "without the spirit of God" dwelling in their midst.

In other words, our people concede that the relationship of man and woman, of husband and wife, as one of mutual complement and supplement. One was not to suppress the equalities and diminish the personality of the other; one was not to diminish and overwhelm and crush the individuality of the other, but both, through spiritual cooperation, were to rise to fuller self-realization, to higher manhood and higher womanhood.

And so, too, the relation between children and parents. One of the sages of our people so wisely said three personalities enter into the life of every human being: his father, his mother and his God. These three have a share in his life, and when the son honors his parents, reveres and loves them, then it is as if God descended from on high and came to dwell in the midst of that family, and God himself were honored.

They tell a beautiful little legend.

When God offered the ten commandments to the nations, and began, "I am the Lord God who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt; thou shalt have no other Gods before me," the nation said, "Behold a jealous God, a God concerned with his own prerogatives and with his own prestige--a selfish Deity!" But when He said: "Honor thy father and thy mother," then they knew that God was the source of morality, that God was concerned not with his own dignity and his own royal prerogatives, but with human beings and their happiness.

In other words, our people came to look upon the home as upon a sanctuary, where love, comradeship, harmony and peace dwelt under the protecting love and the shadowing wings of God himself.

The home, if it is to be a home in the highest sense of the word, is a democratic institution, insofar as it makes for the development of each member of that household. Our conception of the family has changed just as our conception of government has changed. In the past government was monarchical; the authority of the one and the obedience of the many. That was the norm of human political organizations. And so it was with the family. The family in the beginning of time, and up to recent times, and in many lands to this very day, is organized along monarchical, autocratic or patriarchal lines. The governor of the family, his will is law. It cannot be questioned; it cannot be challenged. But we have passed, fortunately, beyond the conception of family regime and family

discipline, just as we have passed beyond the conception of monarchy in government. Today we look upon the family as a cooperative enterprise, as a democratic nucleus, as a place in which everyone--father, mother and children--have certain inalienable rights and certain inescapable duties and responsibilities. In other words, we have come to look upon the family as the training ground for democracy, and to that extent it is well and highly desirable.

But unfortunately, I say, just as in our political life men oftentimes mistake freedom for lack of restraint, for anarchy, for irresponsibility, for privilege without a compensating responsibility, so in this new freedom which is coming to the homes, especially into the homes of this country, it has unfortunately in some instances been distorted, misinterpreted, misapplied, making in many instances for unhappiness, for the breaking up of the home and for sadness in the lives of individuals.

In this land the danger lies not in too much authority in the home, but in too little authority in the home; in the loss of a sense of home loyalty, of self-restraint, of discipline, of duty. You take the youth of America. At no time in the history of the world did young people, young boys and girls, enjoy as much freedom as they do today. Doctor [redacted] in his excellent book on "The Test of Character," makes this assertion, which is absolutely true: "Our young people are the free men of history; the most unsecluded, inexperienced, unsurrounded youth of all

time. Our ideal is to train them in individual initiative, to develop independent judgment and control, but throw them on their own resources, which is excellent when they have these resources. Many of them are making unmitigated nuisances of themselves, because the length of their freedom has got away beyond the strength of their self-control. An unchaperoned group of girls, supposedly from our best families, recently went with a publicly-organized party on an European tour. During the entire trip they drank to excess, they smoked to excess, and their personal immodesty became a scandal to the party. They were enjoying a degree of liberty never before accorded to young women, and they were betraying their utter inability to handle it."

In other words, the freedom extended to young people is an excellent thing; it calls forth in them all that is strong and all that is fine; it makes for initiative; it makes for self-control; it develops them morally; but only as this freedom can and does call forth a corresponding self-control in their lives is that freedom helpful and desirable. When the young man or young woman evidences an appreciation of values, a discriminatory power to sift the true from the false, the real from the tarnished, the proper from the vulgar, the things and the acts which help to develop character from those which help to destroy character, then that young man and young woman should be given every opportunity for increasing freedom; otherwise that freedom sweeps through their lives like a devastating

fire and destroys them.

Those parents who look on with a smile and with equanimity upon their young boys and girls, scarcely out of their teens, scarcely out of their high school years, drinking, smoking, dancing into the wee hours of the morning, rushing hectically from one furious excitement to another, are not developing the individuality of their children. They are destroying that individuality. Parents who pamper their young children with luxuries and expensive dresses on the ground that other parents are doing it, are not helping to develop the character of their children, but they are helping to undermine it; because in such things and through such means character was never and can never be developed. In self-indulgence, in unrestrained pleasure-seeking real manhood and real womanhood was never fashioned; but in self-restraint and in self-control and in the ability to do things temperately and moderately, and living simply and thinking in the finest terms,--in such things is character moulded and fashioned.

What holds true of youth holds true of men and women. Women today are enjoying more freedom than at any time in the history of mankind. Politically and economically they are the equals of men; they have every educational opportunity today; and most of the women of this land are using their opportunities wisely and well. They are enriching their own lives and they are enriching the lives of society. But some mistake the whole concept of freedom;

they lose the whole purpose and meaning of freedom; they take freedom as an end in itself, instead of being a means to a higher social existence. They destroy social restraints and social conventions, and they feel that they are free, but in reality they are just as free and no more free than the boat which is anchorless--free to drift and to drift to its own destruction.

There are some men who have interpreted freedom as moral anarchy. Just because private conduct is no longer under the control of life, therefore they assume that the moral code is no longer imperative. Just because the church no longer can command allegiance and respect, therefore they assume that the spiritual life no longer is valid. With what result? That this unrestrained spiritual and immoral licence, their very accentuation on personal prerogatives and personal rights instead of social responsibilities, is wrecking the American home.

The frightful increase, the menacing increase in divorces in our land among non-Jews, and, sad to say, among Jews, is the result largely, I believe, of this false conception of personal freedom, of the right of a man to live his own life. On such freedom the home and the family can never be built. But on the higher type of freedom--freedom within the law, the moral law, freedom based on loyalty and devotion and mutual respect, and a recognition of the seriousness and the sanctity of human relationship, and on a sense of sacrifice, which is perhaps the highest

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privilege of the free man, and the seal and testimony of
real human emancipation,--on these strong foundations the
home and the family can be built and built firmly.

And so I believe that Mothers Day, which
is dedicated to the honor, but is, after all, the focusing
point, the central theme, the radiant center, of the home,
may still bring to the attention of all of us--fathers,
mothers, sons and daughters--our responsibilities as regards
this home, our daily, hourly responsibility.

Civilization is built up by the humble
efforts of humble men; civilization is not built up by the
heroics of a few individuals. It is unfortunate that
history can only tell of the dramatic and the spectacular
and the catastrophic, and we get a distorted notion of what
makes for civilization, and what are the real constituent
elements of an enduring society. It is not the heroic
individual or the spectacular achievement; it is the myriads
of humble efforts of untold and unheralded and unsung
individuals--the masses, their daily works of service, their
constructive enterprises. These are the things which make
civilization.

And it is so with the home. It is the
daily act of solicitude and service, the undramatic and
unspectacular, almost routine and monotonous act, that makes
the home. A popular poet said that it takes a heap of
living to make a home. And that is true. It also takes a
heap of these cordialities and sollicitudes and kindlinesses

and self-sacrifice, and give and take, to make a home.

The greatest tribute that can be paid a mother is to help her build a home; for after all a mother asks no more, and need not ask more, than that the crown and achievement of her life should be a home founded in love, sustained in harmony, making for the free development of fine men and women. It is not the tribute of the lip, and it is not the gracious tribute of a flower which is the highest tribute to a mother. It is a life of loyalty and devotion, of integrity and uprightness, of helpfulness and kindness, which make possible her dream of a beautiful home, which is the highest tribute.

Give to her the fruit of your hands,
and let her work praise her in this.

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