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When Sinai and Olympus met, 1925.

"WHEN SINAI AND OLYMPUS MEET."

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING.

DECEMBER 13, 1925, CLEVELAND.

WRHS

AMERICAN JEWISH
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JOSEPH T. KRAUS
Shorthand
Reporter
CLEVELAND

The festival of Chanukah which Israel throughout the world celebrates this week commemorates the victories of Israel over the Syrians and Greeks in the year 165 before the common era. The forces of Antiochus the Illustrious, who was determined to make one people out of all the peoples of his wide empire, met the forces of Judas Maccabeus, and they were discomfited by the smaller army, inspired by the greater ideal. The victory of the Maccabees gave political independence to Israel, and, above all, saved the faith of Israel from Syrian domination.

It is well to bear in mind, friends, that this struggle of the Hasmonean was more religious than political. The Jew was content to remain under Persian rule without revolt for nigh unto two hundred years, and the Jew was content to remain under Greek rule for nigh unto one hundred and fifty years without revolting. It was only when Antiochus Epiphanes, following a wrong-headed policy of submerging all racial and religious identities within his empires so as to have a unified people,--it was only when this policy threatened the religious integrity of Israel that our forefathers fought like lions and died like martyrs.

The Jew loved freedom; the Jew loved political freedom, but that freedom which evoked the best that was in him was his sacrificial loyalty to the highest freedom, the freedom of the soul--religious freedom. And perhaps here at

the very outset we have a distinguishing mark between the culture which centered around Sinai and the culture which centered around Olymps. The Greek would never have waged warfare in defense of his religion. Religion was not sufficiently vital to him. You can explain the Greek fairly well without any reference to his religion, but the Jew without his religion is an anomaly. You can no more explain the Jew without reference to his faith than you can explain the flora or the fauna of a country without reference to its climate. To the Greek religion was one department of his political state. The respectable Athenian paid homage to the deity accepted by his state. It was one phase of his life. To the Jew it was the hope of his life; it was the tone, the color, the theme of his life; it was everything.

As early as the days of Homer the gods of the Hellenes were no longer the object of great admiration and mystic reverence on the part of the people and no longer evoked that intense religious theme that the God of Sinai did. Aristophanes could permit himself to mock the gods of Athens with impunity. Not so with the God of Sinai. You see, the gods of the Greeks were beautiful, superb and exalted human beings subject, perhaps, to all the frailties and the lapses of human beings, carrying on in the beautiful mansions on the top of Olympus all the human passions--love and hate and anger, indulging in nectar and ambrosia--gods, beautiful gods, who themselves, however, were caught up in the toils of a relentless fate, who themselves were unable to overcome

destiny and fate.

Such gods, just a little removed from human kind, could be easily disregarded, and they were disregarded easily by the Greeks. Not so the God of Sinai--the God of thunder and the God of lightning, the one, the ineffable, the creator, the judge, the law-giver. None can approach him in levity. He is "a consuming fire." The gods of the Greeks could be worshipped in some formal ritual, perhaps with a system of sacrifices. Not so the God of Sinai. He is holy and can be worshipped only through a prayerful imitation of his holiness. Such a God cannot be lightly disregarded; and he never was by Israel. Israel always felt the awful presence of God at every turn of his life. "If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I ascend into the nethermost parts of the earth, thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, then there thy right hand will take hold of me."

The Greek could not look up to his god as his moral guide, for his god himself was not perfect. The Greek could not say, "Look up to Job; look up to Appello; let him be your guide through life." For Job and Apollo themselves have their moral lapses and their frailties. But to the Jew Jehova could say, "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." There was a guide there and an example there and a model there and an inspiration there which the Greek did not have. And so the Greek had ethics which by the very meaning of the word means social custom, social habits. But the Jew

had God-imitation. "Walk thou before me and be thou perfect." There was the model there and the guide there, and the Rabbis interpret that phrase, "Walk thou before me and be thou perfect"--"Just as I, God, clothe the naked and comfort the sorrowing and nurse the sick, so thou too clothe the naked, comfort the sorrowing and nurse the sick."

Even the philosophers among the Greeks who rose above the popular mythological notion, even they could not conceive of God except as a metaphysical necessity, except as an abstraction. They were never able to conceive of God as a moral necessity and as a personality. The Greek philosopher could construct a whole system of ethics without reference whatsoever to God. The Jew could not define the minimum of his ethical code, his Ten Commandments, without first announcing the source and the sanction and the authority of his ethics. "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

Because the Jew had God as his model in life and perfection as his goal, his faith became prophetic and his religion became Messianic. While the faith of the Greek remained stagnant and his ethics remained static, the Jew always had before him a tantalizing vision, a beckoning and a summoning and a challenging vision--God. The more he reached up to him the more of truth he discovered. God was the great mountain peak in his life, and as he climbed higher and higher to reach his throne, he could see from the successive levels which he ascended on the slope of the

mountain an increasingly widening horizon and truth; he gained new revelations as he touched this over-soul. These revelations became to him so overwhelming, so real, so powerful, so much like a passion and a consuming fire, that he could not resist, but he had to cry aloud and proclaim it unto the world--"Lift up thy voice." He became a prophet and an apostle, a missionary unto the world--a prophet misunderstood and smitten, but a prophet who knew the cross and the crown and the immortality of prophecy.

Not so the Greek. The Greeks had no apostles and the Greeks had no prophets and the Greeks had no prophecies. The Greeks were very little concerned about the world outside. The Greeks never dreamt of being "a light unto the nation." The Greek never conceived of his function in life "to open the doors of the prison house and let those who are incarcerated out into the open." The Greek had no Messianic vision and the Greek never hoped for an endless progress in human life. The highest ethics which the Greeks produced was Stoicism. Stoicism is a beautiful system of ethics; it calls upon man to submit to the laws of nature and to revere them; it calls upon man to face all the misfortunes of life bravely and courageously; it calls upon man to practice self-denial and self-restraint; it calls upon man to think more of character than of things--profound wisdom and high ethical teaching; the kind of teaching that he found scattered throughout the pages of the Bible and the Apocrypha, especially in such books as the Book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. And

yet something is missing there; a driving impulse is missing there. One fails to find in the whole system of Greek Stoicism an ideal such as "Love thy neighbor as thyself"; one fails to find there an ethical ideal which protects the weak, the stranger, the orphan, the widow, the fatherless and the slave. It is astounding how the Greeks could look with equanimity upon the torture of slaves. Their ethics was a system of guidance for the aristocrats and the masters of the world. The unfortunates, the slaves, the denied, the disinherited had no share or fortune in their ethical system; and yet in the ethical code of Israel they are at the very top of it. "God is the father of the orphan and the judge of the widow. Thou shalt not oppress the stranger, for he is a stranger to the land of Egypt."

You do not find in the ethics of the Greek the sense of self-immolation for the sake of human advancement, the duty of sacrificing oneself and the dearest things which a man has--of dying so that others might live more abundantly. You do not find there the creative impulse to improve life. Stoicism spoke of fate; Judaism spoke of progress. Stoicism was static; Judaism was Messianic. This, to my mind, is the great distinction between the religion which centered around Sinai and the religion which centered around Olympus.

Matthew Arnold said that the difference between the spirit of the Hebrew and the spirit of the Greek was this: The Hebrew emphasized right acting, and the Greek emphasized

right thinking. Hebraism emphasized conduct, and Hellenism emphasized thought; Hebraism spoke of duty; Hellenism spoke of clear intelligence; the Jew spoke of self-conquest, and the Greek spoke of life conquest. But that, to my mind, is erroneous. That distinction really did not exist; it is more apparent than real. The Jew laid a great deal of emphasis on wisdom. One need but read the marvelous eulogies of wisdom in a book like the Book of Proverbs to realize how much weight the Jew placed upon wisdom and upon knowledge; and the Jew, of course, always had a critical mind, a reasoning mind and a questioning mind. He questioned even the essential doctrines of his faith, says a book like Job or a book like Ecclesiastes. There is a difference between the Greek outlook on life and the Jewish outlook on life, and it is this: the Jewish outlook on life was a sacred outlook, and the Greek outlook on life, pagan outlook on life was a secular outlook. The Jewish outlook was kodesh--holy. The pagan outlook was . ^{profane.} ~~profound.~~

The blessing which you pronounce in kindling of the Chanukah light, and the blessing which you pronounce, if you do pronounce the blessing, at meal time, or a thousand and one incidents in life, reads something like this: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us by his hands." Every duty in life, every obligation in life is an act of sanctification, and every act of life to the Jew partook of the character of edification and consecration, from the care of the body to the care of the

soul; every minute act was under the seeing eye and the beholding spirit of God, and was performed in a mode of reverence and sanctity. The table upon which food was spread became an altar of the living God. Marriage and family life became sacred institutions in Israel, and the home was the sanctuary of the living God. Why they even took such secular conceptions as nationalism and translated it into the realm of sanctity. Israel was not to be merely a political unit, a secular people, but "a holy people," a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

That is, to my mind, a profound conception of life and an utterly new conception of life which the Jew introduced into the thought of the world. The Jew tried to secularize life by bringing more and more knowledge into it; the Jew tried to sanctify life by bringing God increasingly more and more into it. The Jew looked with favor upon knowledge, upon wisdom, upon the cultivation of one's mental faculties always, but knowledge was a means and not an end in itself; knowledge was to help man to reach up to God; knowledge was to help man to reach up to a life of purity and nobility, to holiness. The meaning of wisdom and the end of wisdom was reverence of God.

The Jew looked with favor upon freedom. He fought for freedom of all peoples. He perhaps was the most restive under the yoke of oppression. But freedom, too, was not an end in itself but a means. It was freedom to live the exalted life of consecration. It was freedom to be with God.

The Jew favored the acquisition of wealth; he never looked upon poverty as especially divine, as other faiths did; but wealth, too, was merely a means towards a higher end. Once our physical wants are satisfied man is then free to devote himself to the satisfaction of his spiritual self.

The Rabbis said the shachina, the holy spirit, rests only upon the rich, the wise and the strong. In other words, wisdom, strength, possessions in themselves are good, but only as they serve as the receptacle for the shachina, for the holy spirit. The pagan outlook on life was utterly different. These things were ends in themselves--science, freedom, art, wealth, comfort--ends in themselves, and there-
in is the eternal struggle between Jewish outlook on life and the pagan outlook on life, between Sinai and Olympus.

And that struggle which Chanukah symbolizes still continues to this day. The battle of the Maccabees was not the first nor the last. Especially in our day there is the tendency to secularize life, to look upon invention and discoveries and production and the accumulation of wealth and the accumulation of knowledge as ends in themselves, ultimates, goals in life; but knowledge without divinity, wealth without, ^{the} disciplining spirit of holiness are devastating in human life. Freedom which is only freedom to have more, progress which is only progress to acquire more, are a curse to mankind. It is well to have more if it helps you to be more; it is well to be free if it helps you to serve more; it is well to know more if it helps you to think in higher terms

and in a higher plane and to feel more keenly the spiritual values of life. "Ye have sanctified all us at his commandment." There is the uniqueness, therein is the meaning and therein is the prophetic destiny of Israel.

The opening verse of the book of Maccabees from which I read this morning says that the call of war of the Maccabees was that Antiochus sought to make Israel like every other people, and Israel from the very outset of its heroic career assumed that it is "a different and a distinctive people"; not different because it enjoys greater privileges, not different because it is favored more by God; not different because it is wiser or stronger or racially more fit. Not at all. Different because of a differing attitude on life which somehow God in His providence gave to this people; different because it carried a passion for some thing which other peoples did not have. And this difference, this uniqueness of the Sinaitic people was just this: that it approached everything in life as if it were part of a vast mosaic of holiness--everything in every man. There is nothing in life so humble, so crude, so ugly but what somehow it partakes of the quality of sanctity, because it is of God and God dwells in it. There is not a human being so illiterate, so ignorant, so miserable, so sinful, but that somehow God dwells in him, too; and somehow there is in him a uniqueness and a holiness; he has in himself a unique integrity; he is by himself a consummation, and therefore his life is holy and sacred. "Touch not mine annointed because he is holy."

We ought to retain that attitude on life if we are to continue to live as a separate people. It is the only justification for separate existence which the Jew has. Our prayer today, like our prayer in olden days, the prayer voiced by the psalmist, should be: "Thy spirit of holiness, God, do not take away from me."

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When Sinai Olympus Met.

Sermon 194
Ant. J. to unity
Empire "all should be
one hope" -

1. Chanukkah - commemorates victory of Israel over Syrians in 165 ^{BC} led by Judah the Macc. the desperate stand pressed Jews of Israel overthrew the hosts of Antiochus Epiphanes - Victory reestablished Jew. commonwealth & an indep. govt. and saved rel. of our people from possible extinction -
2. Not a mere pol. struggle Content to remain under Persian rule 200 years, under Greek rule 150 yrs - It was only when his rel. was menaced that he fought like a lion. The Jew loved freedom of course. But the freedom which evoked his greatest response was not pol. freedom, but the higher freedom, the freedom, the soul - rel. freedom -
3. Perhaps there you at once ^{may} see ^{me} essential diff. in attitude bet. Jew and Greek. The Greek would never have wage war in defense of his religion. It was not ^{essentially} vital to him. You can't explain the Greek without reference to his Rel. The Jew is an anomaly without it - You can no more explain the Jew without ref. to his faith, than you can explain the flora of a country without ref. to its climate. Rel. among the Hellenes was one of the defects of the pol. state. A Respect Athenian never paid homage to the deities of the State. But as early as Homer the gods had ceased to be objects of ^{curious} feeling ^{among the people} and Aristophanes could ~~not~~ poke fun at them with impunity. Rel. was gone phase of the Greek life. It was the whole life of Israel. It was the color, the tone, ^{and} the texture theme of his life -
4. In the Greek - the gods of Olympus were glorified & ^{exalted} superior human beings, grasping, vengeful and inhuman -

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Laws
of
the
Universe

all of which ~~are~~ is sound philosophy - + profound
human wisdom - one finds it throughout the pages, the
Bible & everywhere - esp. in the Wisdom Ltr. like Proverbs
+ Eccles - But we miss the charac. Jew. motif -
the idea of "Love thy Neighbor as thyself" of sacrifice
for other men, of dying that others might live
more abundantly - of improving & perfecting the world
This, the creation & perpetuation improvement on others
is lacking in pagan thought - Stoic's Spoke
of Fate, judgment of Proper. Stoic was Stoic.
Jew. was Therapeutic.

9. Stoic - Stoic - Herein lies real distinction. But culture which
culture must live + that around Olympus. It is a
left. lost the secular + secular - Matthew Arnold is right.
accurate when he says that Heb - right achy, Heb right, Heb right, Heb right,
(1) conduct (2) thought (3) Heb right, Heb right, Heb right, Heb right,
(1) duty (2) Clear Intel. (1) Heb right to Heb right.
A. "wisdom" - Critical intellect - double, Job Ecc.
every part of

A. Sacrificing of life - secularizing life. Stoic - Stoic
Stoic - Stoic - Every ethical duty
was an act, sanct - and every act of life was
of an ethical rel signific. Every human duty
carried the charac of education & consecration
from care, the only to care, the only to care. The family became
an act, marriage, parenthood, family life was hallowed
for reason and with high experience - learning
Nation

The great task has been to say (the words of the Haskalah
 for the Jew) that the Jew is a man, a man with a soul, a man with a heart,
 at the very core of Jew. Ethical consideration. ^{with} Explanatory
 Jnd. may ~~every life~~ each life, every life
 sacred & inviolable, a thing of unique integrity, a
 consummation in itself —



Nationalism was everywhere. From East to West. From
 East to West, a people and a people.

the great ideal is the sanctity. Life by being put into
it. The great ideal is the sanctity, life by being
thundered into. But then, without fear is
often demitaking. — It is well to then even if I feel
you to be more, to have more, if it helps you to grow
more; to be more free if it helps you to reach more —
if secure, perhaps freedom as translated into exaltation
of character — into consecration of spirit — Job 1.11
All this is not to be — all must reach up to

Open soul — ~~Real Wisdom is Wisdom~~ Job 1.11
when "Freedom means only freedom to get rich, & power, power in acquisition
& happiness only in multiplication of possessions" then they are a curse —
10 Chambers, an Anglo Rel. Spirit of 1877 against
pagan sp. of sp. — Against Knowledge, freedom, pleasure,
undirected. To self-sublimation — The Rel. sp. brings
firmly about. It was not the first nor the last battle.
It is still struggling in world to-day — as we
thrustly fight — let us rem. pray for it

Job 1.11