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The only basis for goodwill between Jew and non-Jew, 1927.

"THE ONLY BASIS FOR GOOD-WILL BETWEEN JEW AND NON-JEW"

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING

2 DECEMBER 25th, 1927.

Good-will must be based upon mutual respect and regard for the inviolability of human personality.

I like to be on the best of terms with my neighbor. I desire his good-will even as I proffer mine. But upon one condition only - that he respect my individuality, even as I respect his. We must be ready to cooperate in the common tasks of our vital life on the basis of what we are, not on a basis of what each may think the other ought to be.

There are those who would acquire good-will through assimilation. In as much as ill-will is due in the last analysis to the existance of differences - cultural - racial and religious - they would obviate this ill-will by obviating the differences. But this is too high price to pay. The thing acquired is worth less than the thing surrendered. To use Benjamin Franklin's phrase, "It is paying too dear for the whistle."

Only on a basis of cultural and religious steadfastness of myself and my neighbor can true good-will be built. The other kind which demands the obliteration of self, the abnegation of all that I can bring with me to the community of interests, is not good-will at all. It is the good-will of a lion consuming the lamb.

There is a good-will based on indifference. Your religion matters little to you - my religion matters little to me, therefore we can be finely indulgent to ony another and thus credit ourselves with being broadminded.

But this is not tolerance but unconcern. No particular credit is due the man who is good-willed and indulgent where his interests are not involved.

Good-will is difficult and praise-worthy where strong differences exist and where firm convictions are passionately held. To be a strong protagonist of certain ideals and yet to discover among those who may not share them numberless other fine qualities and virtues which can serve as bonds of unity. This is real good-will.

A true Jew and a true Christian, each holding loyally to his convictions and each remaining true to his inspiring traditions and each observing his distinctive customs may yet find a multitude of similarities of common interests and common enthusiasms which may become the basis for a lasting structure for good-will and fellowship.

The task of our day is not to obliterate differences, not to attempt to force all peoples into one common mold, but to respect these differences and to try to discover the common human denominator upon which to rest a community of common tasks.

"THE ONLY BASIS FOR GOOD WILL
BETWEEN JEW AND NON-JEW."

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER.

THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY MORNING,

DECEMBER 25, 1927, CLEVELAND, O.



JOSEPH T. KRAUS
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The outstanding message of Chanukah is of course loyalty. If Israel has survived, it is due, in the main, to the loyalty and steadfastness of a few who, in the midst of temptation and oppression and tribulation, remained unswerving in their allegiance. The Maccabees 2200 years ago waged relentless warfare not only upon the idolatries of the heathen which the Syrian Greeks under Antiochus Epiphanes sought to impose upon Israel; they waged warfare not only against the oppressive measures which were employed by Antiochus to impose these idolatries upon the people; they waged warfare not only in defense of their human rights and liberty, --these Maccabees fought unto death for safeguarding the sanctities of Jewish life, the moral standards of the Hebrew civilization which were being undermined by the decadent Asiatic Hellenism of the second century before the common era.

The Maccabees were defending Jewish idealism against the hedonism, the materialistic paganism which the Levantine civilization of that day brought with it into Palestine. These Maccabees were uncompromising, unyielding in their opposition to those elements in the old Greek civilization which threatened the integrity of Judaism.

Now this Maccabean zeal for the safeguarding of what they regarded as the essentials of Jewish life and

thought, that zeal is characteristic of Israel throughout the ages and was responsible for Israel's survival. Israel since its dispersion nearly 1900 years ago lived constantly in the midst of alien cultures, alien civilization, and it adopted frequently from these cultures and adapted itself to these cultures. It was always ready to learn; it was always ready to receive cultural stimulation from the peoples in whose midst Israel found itself--whether it be the ancient Babylonians or the Egyptians or the Greeks or the Persians or the Romans or the Arabs, or the peoples of Western Europe. Israel has never isolated itself intellectually but was eager to receive even as it was eager to give cultural values.

But whenever Israel suspected a lurking danger in that alien culture, something which threatened its own integrity, it almost instinctively withdrew and cast about itself bulwarks, protection and defense against these threatening alien ideas; and when it was able it even entered the field, the arena of battle and fought these foreign and alien ideas.

Israel refused to sacrifice the uniqueness of its own personality for any values which it might receive from other cultures and other peoples. It never yielded; it refused to merge; it refused to be assimilated. It was not unyielding and hard in the sense of not departing and never changing. It did develop and did change, but according to the logic and the laws of its own inner life. But it

insisted upon preserving itself. It was always "a people living amidst other peoples," but at the same time quite apart from other people.

Now this has led the uninformed to charge Israel with being clannish and tribal and intolerant and narrow and irliberal. That charge is heard in our own day; and yet nothing can be farther from the truth, because no people in antiquity developed as universalistic a conception of God and of morality as Israel, and no people throughout the ages to this day preached so consistently and so passionately the doctrine of the brotherhood of people and the all-embracing fatherhood of God as Israel. And Israel preached that even during those desperate eras when it was persecuted and oppressed and driven into dirty ghettos,-- conditions which, according to all the laws of human nature, should have forced Israel into a spiritual isolation and into an embittered seclusion. And yet throughout the ages, in the darkest period, Israel persisted in preaching the doctrines of human brotherhood and justice.

I am afraid that those who charge Israel with tribalism fail to understand one of the most focal and central ideas in Judaism, and that is the idea of the covenant. Unless you understand the idea of the covenant, you will fail to understand the philosophy of the so-called Jewish . The Bible says that God made a covenant with Abraham, renewed it with Isaac and with Jacob; that the self-same covenant was reaffirmed with Moses and the children

of Israel at Mount Sinai; and throughout the pages of the Bible you will find like a heroic refrain this phrase--the covenant which exists between God and Israel.

I read to you this morning a chapter from a much later book--from the Book of the Maccabees, and you will remember that in that chapter half a dozen times the phrase was repeated--"the covenant which exists between Israel and God." Now translated in modern terms, what is meant by this covenant? Why, it simply means this: that Israel was conscious early in its history that, somehow, it had found the religious and spiritual truth concerning the oneness and the spirituality of God; concerning God as the source of all the moral aspirations of the human race; that Israel had discovered these truths before any other people; that it was, to use the phrase of the Bible, "the first-born of the Lord"; that its peculiar racial genius enabled it to ascertain moral and spiritual values earlier than any other people; that it had the peculiar sensitiveness for spirituality and morality, and that therefore it was called upon to be the spokesman and the teacher and the preacher of these ideals to the world; to be the leader of these ideals to mankind.

It was chosen for that purpose; that was its mission; that was its eternal covenant with Jehovah. Every people has its peculiar gifts to give to mankind, its peculiar abilities, its peculiar capacities. Israel had a religious and a moral capacity for leadership, and so in

order more effectively to preach its mission to mankind, Israel determined early to submit itself to a very rigorous system of discipline, to keep itself, as it were, in intensive training so as to be at all times ready and fit for its work; to be like a priest who is always alert to the implications and the obligations of his office; like a priest, too, who is reminded by symbol and ritual and ceremony of the duties of his office.

And so Israel set out to be, as the Bible put it, "a kingdom of priests and a holy people."

Now these laws and customs and rituals which Israel evolved were binding only upon itself and upon no one else. It was the peculiar code for that fraternity which had a peculiar mission to perform in life. In other words, it was the distinctiveness of its past which made of Israel a distinctive people, and the object of that elaborate system of discipline was not to isolate Israel from the World but to fashion Israel into the most effective tool for the service of the world. For what was its mission if not to be "a light unto the nations," to use the words of the prophet, "--to lead the imprisoned out of the prison house, and he who dwells in darkness out into the great light"?

It was to be a servant of mankind--not an exploiter, not to triumph over mankind, but to serve it. Israel volunteered to assume the burdens of a rigid mode of life, in order that it might more effectively serve the

highest interests of mankind.

I say that Israel regarded itself as the special servant of God; but it never monopolized God. It spoke of its God as the God of all people, Jew and non-Jew. "God judges the whole world in righteousness and all the nations in justice, for all are His children." Israel never monopolized man's way to God. It never said that only through my way can you come to God. There is a very beautiful phrase of the Rabbis: "The Bible says, 'This is the gate leading to God; the righteous may enter therein.'" And the Rabbis say, "Mind you, it does not say 'This is the gate to the Lord; the priests may enter unto it, or the Levites may enter into it, or the Israelites may enter into it; but this is the gate of the Lord, the righteous, all righteous of all people, may enter into it.'" Into the courts of the Lord.

Why, it never even monopolized its own temple, its own sanctuary. When Solomon dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem, it is most amusing that at that critical moment, when the religious genius of the race expressed itself in the glorious shrine which was to be the symbol of Judaism, in that moment, praying unto the Lord, Solomon did not forget to add: "And the stranger who is not of thy people, Lord, when he will come into this place dedicated to thy name and pray unto thee, do thou, Lord, incline thine ear and hearken unto his prayer." And the prophet repeats that phrase, that idea that the sanctuaries of Israel were

meant for all mankind, when he said, "My house shall be called the house of prayer for all mankind."

And Israel did not even monopolize its Torah. The Rabbis asked, "Why was the Torah not given in Palestine? Why was it given in the desert on Mt. Sinai"? So that Israel shall never claim that it alone is entitled to the privileges of the spiritual ideals of the Torah, but that all people may come to it along all avenues, as free and open as the desert,--all people may claim the Torah. And the Rabbis add to that by declaring that the non-Jew who follows the ethical teachings of the Torah, who remembers the Torah, is likened unto the high-priest in the Temple, and will have a share in the world to come.

And the world to come Israel did not monopolize. Most every religion took an option on heaven for itself, for its devotees, and excluded everyone else. Not so this narrow, tribal, clannish people--Israel. They said--and they incorporated into their law--"The righteous among the gentiles will have a portion of the world to come." And the interesting thing to be remembered is that Israel never asked the non-Jew to accept its mode of life; its ritual; its discipline. It was not necessary for a non-Jew to become a Jew in order to be the privileged child of God and in order to have a portion in the world to come. That discipline, that special code of institutions and practices, dietary laws, the observance of Sabbath and the holidays and the numerous other restrictions,--that was

for Israel exclusively; that was its peculiar set of restrictions and prohibitions and practices and customs.

The non-Jew needed but to obey seven laws and no more, to be the equal of the most observing Jew, and they were simply the basic laws of morality: not to steal, not to murder, not to commit adultery, not to worship idols, not to blaspheme, to have courts of justice established, and not to be cruel, especially to animals. This minimum code, when practiced by the non-Jew, was sufficient to make him equal in every sense to the Jew who obeyed the 613 commandments.

And the Jew did not monopolize the Holy Spirit. I remind you again of a phrase which I have frequently quoted, but never feel that I have quoted enough. One of the Rabbis declared: "I call heaven and earth to witness that be he Jew or non-Jew, man or woman, bondsman or freeman, according to his acts will the Holy Spirit descend upon him." And the prophets of Israel, who loved their people with an everlasting love, did not exclude other people from their love and their compassion. No people afflicted Israel more than Assyria, and no people persecuted Israel more than Egypt, and yet the prophet Isaiah is able to vision a day when even these enemies of Israel will become the close friends and well-wishers of his people, and they, too, will be blessed. "In that day," says Isaiah, "shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth. For that

the Lord of hosts hath blessed him, saying, Blessed be Egypt, my people,"---Egypt, which had enslaved Israel for four hundred years; Egypt, which had waged constant warfare upon Israel, is called by a prophet of Israel "God's people?" even as Israel is God's people. "Blessed be Egypt, my people, and Assyria"---Assyria which destroyed the kingdom of Israel, the kingdom of the North,---"and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."

And the prophet Jeremiah, who prophesied doom for his own people because of their iniquities, and also prophesied doom for a neighboring stranger people, Moab, says this to Moab: "Therefore my heart moaneth for Moab like pipes, and my heart moaneth like pipes for the men of Kir-heres." Jeremiah has sympathy and love for stranger people even as Israel had.

Israel never claimed any superiority of race. The doctrine that one race is superior to another was abhorrent to Israel, and all those Nordic superiority notions of our own day based on pseudo-science, would be anathematized by the people who preached that all peoples were equal. There is but one superiority which Israel claimed and was justified in claiming, and that was a religious superiority, but a religious superiority which was accessible and within the reach of any people who sought to achieve it. A racial superiority cannot be had by peoples of other races. There is a fatalism in that. If you happen to be born in Northwestern Europe of Nordic

stock, you have been by nature endowed with superior qualities of mind and body; and if you happen to belong to another race, a Southern, a Mediterranean, a Latin, a Semitic race, you are excluded from that privilege forever. But a cultural superiority, a religious superiority--that is within the reach of anyone who aspires to attain it.

As far as race is concerned, the Rabbis said: "The Bible declares, 'This is the book (the Bible) of the generation of man.' Not of Israel. This is the book of the generation of man. And Ben Hasi declared, " This is a basic principle in the Torah." This is one of the fundamentals of Judaism,--that man is the unit, quite regardless of his racial antecedents, and that religion concerns itself with man and not with the race to which that man belongs. And Israel declared that there can only be one law for Jew and non-Jew. "There shall be unto you," declares the Book of Leviticus, "one law applicable alike to the stranger as to the native born, for I am the Lord."

It is very interesting to note the attitude of this clannish, tribal people to the stranger and the sojourner in its midst. We find no immigration laws in the Bible. Everyone was welcome to come and make his home with that little country, which was crowded as it was. And how was the stranger welcomed? There are two words in the Bible for the stranger. One is nokri, a man of another people; the other is an immigrant, one who wishes to

make his home with the children of Israel. Now, the life and the property and the rights of the nokri were safeguarded by the law, and the highest measure of hospitality was extended to him. Abraham, when he sees a stranger pass by his tent, runs out to meet him and invite him into his home, and kills his fatted calf, and his wife Sarah prepares the richest foods for this stranger. Rebecca, when she beholds a stranger, offers him food and lodging, and also food and provender for his animal. And the man who resolved to make his home with Israel--mind you, not to become a Jew but merely to live among Jews--why, that man was protected a hundredfold; and the Bible takes particular care to see that his rights are protected. "Accursed be he who violates the rights of the stranger,"--who perverts the justice for the stranger. "God is the particular guardian of the stranger," even as he is the guardian of the orphan and the widow.

So that Israel cannot in all fairness be charged with lacking good will and the spirit of brotherliness for other people. But this should be remembered: that at all times Israel refused to purchase that good will and that brotherliness at the price of self-annihilation and self-destruction. It loved the heathen but hated heathenism and denounced and castigated heathenism. Of principles it refused to yield an iota.

And this is the message that I should like to leave with you this morning. There are some people who

would like to acquire good will through assimilation. They know that intolerance in the last analysis is due to the existence of differences--religious differences, racial differences, cultural differences, and that therefore they believe that they can do away with intolerance by obviating these differences. And that is paying too high a price; the thing gained is less worth than the thing surrendered. To use Benjamin Franklin's phrase, "That is paying too dearly for the ."

I like to be on the best of terms with my neighbor. I invite their friendship even as I proffer my own--but only on one condition: that he respect my individuality even as I respect his individuality. He must take me for what I am even as I must take him for what he is; not for what each of us would like the other one to be. I am what I am. I have been molded and fashioned by thousands of years of a peculiar racial, cultural experience; I am a definite, peculiar racial precipitate; I am distinctive, a product of a distinct environment, and I wish to remain that even as my ancestors wished to remain what they were, and I am ready to acknowledge that my neighbor has the same right to retain his individuality and his racial and cultural distinctiveness, and it is on the basis of our mutual distinctiveness that I would like to build a real, enduring sense of good will and cooperation.

I am a Hebrew and not Anglo-Saxon; I am a Hebrew and not a Teuton, nor a Gaul, or a Slav, and never

will be, and I do not wish to be called upon to take on the protective coloration, the manners, the attitudes, the points of view of the Anglo-Saxon or the Teuton or the Slav or the Gaul or the Latin, in order to be like unto him. I do not wish to take on the livery of any man in order to enjoy the privilege of being in his retinue. I wish to be myself. Any other basis for good will is spurious; any movement for good will which demands of me my self-abnegation, the obliteration of my characteristics, is a false step. A man who would like to be my friend only when he can convert me, as it were, to his way of living and thinking and believing, is not my friend; he is my enemy. He does not like me as I am; he likes his reflection in me; he would like to make me in his image.

The Jew who would like to cast aside his distinctiveness in order to win good favor and good will brings nothing to that ultimate communion of minds and souls. He will bring to that hope for fraternity nothing but a masquerading, a spurious self-exploitation, a washed-out personality. He has nothing to give; he has denied himself and destroyed his uniqueness. It is only an integrated, purposeful, vibrant, affirmative personality which has something to give to a community of personality--good will.

There is another type of toleration and good will which I despise, and that is good will based on indifference. "I am a Jew and do not care very much about

my religion, and you are a Christian and do not care very much about your religion. Why, then we can have good will among us; we can be broad-minded about it." That is not toleration; that is unconcern. For an agnostic Jew and an agnostic non-Jew to have good will is no achievement. It is for a believing Jew, profoundly stirred and moved by his faith, and for a believing Christian, profoundly moved and stirred by his faith,--for these two, remaining true to their distinctive faiths, to discover a basis for good will, to discover in each other human qualities and virtues which may function as links uniting them.

That is an achievement; that is the highest achievement of civilization; that is the flowering of civilization. I belong to an organization, a small organization of clergymen in this city. Nearly all the members of it are non-Jews. They are all zealous for their faith even as I am for my faith. Their religious backgrounds, their racial backgrounds, are different from mine; their conduct, their set of habits, their holidays, are different from mine; their memories are different. And yet in no organization have I experienced a greater and a truer sense of good will as in that organization; because we were able to discover in us, in spite of our distinctiveness and our differences, common human qualities which endeared us one to another,--common human tasks upon which we can cooperate, common loyalties, common devotion, common enthusiasm. We were able even to find agreements in our

very differences. We were able because of that to think together, to meet together, to exchange views, to enrich, to extend our lives, our minds.

Now that is the only basis for good will in the world, my friends, the only basis for good will that means anything in the world. Good will must be based upon one thing, and that is supreme regard for the inviolability for the life and the character of your neighbor, respect for what he is, even as you affirmatively and aggressively carry on in the name of those things in which you believe. Good will does not demand self-sacrifice, self-abnegation, washing out our identities. Good will demands that we shall try to discover, even among those with whom we differ, such qualities of heart and mind, and such other interests which may form the foundations upon which to rear a structure of human fraternity and cooperation.

Let each man walk in the name of his God, just so each man remembers that the first thing which his God demands of him is to be just to his neighbor, to be loving to his neighbor; just so each man remembers that one of the primary qualities of the good and the true man is to walk humbly with God, to mimic him in modesty--not the overbearing attitude, not the snobbish attitude, not the touch-me-not attitude, not the attitude of him who believes that he is superior, but the attitude of basic humility which draws one man to another, one brother to another.