



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
153

Box
54

Folder
381

As youth views the world, 1930.

AS YOUTH VIEWS THE WORLD

BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER
AT THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY, DECEMBER
28th, 1930

It is a pleasure, my friends, to welcome the young men and women who have returned home for the holidays from their colleges and universities and who are here this morning, even as it is a great pleasure to meet again the young men and women of our congregation who have not been away, whom we see frequently and who have joined this youth rally in order that they may demonstrate anew our solidarity, the unbroken continuity of Temple allegiance.

The Synagogue, my friends, is the oldest religious institution in the world, - older by far than church or mosque - older than any religious shrine that can claim an ascertainable and definable historic continuity.

The Synagogue has survived all manners of persecution, a nigh endless wandering. You can almost trace the history of our people in its pilgrimage across the face of the earth in the record of ruined and destroyed Synagogues.

The Synagogue always found itself in the midst of a hostile population and legal prohibitions and set enactments, as well as violence and intolerance frequently combined to check its

growth and threatened it and yet, somehow it has survived. And after centuries and centuries of a sad and uncertain precarious existence, it faces the Twentieth century. It faces the world today, mighty and strong, arrayed in an outward splendor of Temples and Synagogues comparable only to the glory which belongs to the central national shrine in olden days on Mount Zion.

Why is this so? What is the secret of this perpetuity of the Synagogue? The answer is not far to see. At all times there was a generation of young people ready and at hand to carry on the mission of the Synagogue. In every age, through these long centuries, the Jewish parent was able to say to his growing son or daughter, "The torch which my father gave in trust to me, thy father now gives to thee."

There is a beautiful phrase in one of our Psalms, Psalm number one hundred and twenty-seven, which the Jew never forgot:
(quote Hebrew)

"Like arrows in the hand of the mighty man, so are the young people. Blessed is the man who hath filled his quiver with them; he shall not be ashamed when he is forced to hold parley with the enemy."

Like an arrow in the hand of the valiant man, so are the children of the young generation.

The Jew never had any army to defend him since the beginning of his exile. The Jew never had an army with which to

protect himself. He was defenceless. But he was able to forge for himself a living armor of youth. And he was able to train that youth in each successive generation, in religious steadfastness and loyalty. And behind this fortress of a faithful youth, he was impregnable.

Our forefathers, my friends, were so much impressed with the thought that their safety and perpetuity lay in a trained and educated and loyal youth, that they transferred their Synagogue into a place of study, or rather, the remains of the Synagogue, - a place of study as well as a place of worship. And they commanded that all children shall be trained from infancy, rich and poor, the orphan as well as the more favored ones, - that all children from infancy shall be trained in the law, the lore, the culture and the tradition of the race.

The Church throughout the Dark Ages prohibited people from reading the Bible. It restricted that privilege to the clergy. The Church didn't want the masses, the laity, to study for themselves the original sources of the faith. Not so Judaism! Judaism declared and commanded every Jew (quote Hebrew)

"Thou shalt meditate upon it, upon the Torah, day and night."

Judaism encouraged study, research, questioning, even doubt, - even doubting. For our sages were convinced that while

Judaism could not survive ignorance, could not survive indifference, it could not only survive, but it would actually thrive upon knowledge and free intellect.

And so our own Temple, Tifereth Israel, has these many years laid great emphasis upon study, teaching, learning. We builded here in our own Synagogue, a religious school and a high school where Jewish youth can be trained in the fundamentals of Jewish thought and Jewish experience. And some of you here this morning are the confirmants of this school and the graduates of this high school.

But that is not enough. And this is one of the two things that I should like to present to you this morning.

That is not enough. The study of Judaism is a life-time enterprise, not an enterprise of a few years in one's early youth. At the best, during our early years we can lay the foundation, The structure, we must rear through all the succeeding years of our life.

You see the ocean of Jewish life and thought and experience is vast beyond compare and many rivers have run into it and have deposited their precious cargo upon it. Forty centuries! Almost the whole span of recorded human history. For that's what it really amounts to. Forty centuries is the calendar of Israel's life. And in every land and every clime some great drama of Jewish thought or Jewish experience was enacted. Every mountain-pass knew the wandering feet of our people. All the storied rivers of the

earth, the Ganges, the Nile, the Jordon, the Tiber, the Godalkwiver, the Danube, the Rhine, the Thames, the Hudson and the Mississippi, - all the great and storied rivers of the world have witnessed the settlements of our people upon their banks and heard the accents of our peoples' voices. Prophets, poets, sages, philosophers, statesmen have all poured the rich treasures of their hearts and minds into the life-stream of our people for four thousand years.

It takes more than one life-time to become acquainted with such a history. And this vast heritage, my friends, remarkable both for quality and quantity, for its character and colorfulness, is yours. That's the heritage which your fathers are handing down in trust to you.

And in that heritage there is food for human life, nurture for the human spirit. There is inspiration for magnificent living, for a noble way of life.

Therefore do not turn from your heritage as from something you can do without. Do not look upon it as something old-fashioned and antiquated, something that was a Sunday school project or pass-time, something which has no relevancy to your life and to your present problems and interests. If you do that, you will commit a great injustice to yourselves. That heritage is ancient but profoundly modern, pertinent, and of important significance in life today.

There is in that literature that our people created, thoughts which shook the world, ideas which carved a new highway for civilization, programs of social justice, human equality and international peace, which mankind to this day has not even approximated, - wisdom which has guided countless generations of men to blessedness, peace and contentment, a philosophy which has outlived a hundred schools of philosophic speculation. Don't look upon the spiritual and intellectual creations of your people as something belonging to the dim, distant, past, unrelated to the busy world of turmoil, of steel, science and mechanism of today. If you do, you will be making a grave and serious mistake.

There is in that history of your people something which is rarely magnificent. You will find in it, if you will read it, not as a child in a Sunday school, but as a young man or woman grown into maturity, you will find evidence enough, of the victory of mind over matter, of ideas over force, of the few over the many, of the unquenchable spirit of the great prophetic idea.

I am satisfied, my young friends, to have you acquaint yourselves with every branch of human knowledge. I am satisfied to have you test every philosophy in the world. I am satisfied to have you examine critically and relentlessly every thesis of Jewish ethics and Jewish religion, if only you will

continue to have an open mind, to read, and read deep into your people's thought, your people's literature, your people's religious traditions, your people's philosophic speculations. If only you will read and study, you will come back, thirsting for the living fountains of your people's aspirations. I have no doubt of it. That's what happened all through the ages. It is only the ignorant, the uninformed, who when they drift away seldom return.

When in your school days and your university days, when you first come in contact with ideas of metaphysics, ideas of philosophic notions which seem to challenge and even to undermine the religious faith which you have been taught, and you begin to doubt and question, my one advice to you friends, is this: Do not stop doubting, but follow through. Keep an open mind. Beyond the doubt there is something else and after you have completed that cycle through which all thinking people pass, that intellectual cycle which begins in early life, in beliefs, in heritage, in traditions accepted and then passes over into doubt and skepticism and negation, don't stay there, but continue the cycle of your intellectual pilgrimage and you will reach again the main-spring, the eternal faith of your people's God.

I am not troubled when a young man comes to me hot from his first year or two at college or university, all

confused in his ideas. But I am very much saddened by those who come to me,-if they come at all, or those that I hear about,- who have drifted away, not because the Synagogue was tried by them and found wanting, not because they submitted Jewish theology to a critical examination and found it inadequate, but because they found themselves somehow superior to Judaism, possessed of certain stupid and worthless social ambitions. They have come to look upon their contacts with Jews and Jewish life as a liability and therefore everything that smacks of Judaism as distinctly undesirable. These people who suffer, in most instances, for the sins of their fathers, who are trying to become amateur gentiles away at school, are prone to depreciate everything that is Jewish, and particularly the Synagogue because it is altogether Jewish and not sufficiently exclusive.

For such people there can be no remedy, except disillusionment, which will come to them later on in life. We can only pity them because they are wasting days on hankering after things which are false and vain and which do not enrich or enoble their lives.

They are not new phenomenon in Jewish life. We have known such people in every generation. For the last two thousand years there have been young people and older people bent upon assimilation and headed to find that they are on the wrong side of

the fence, as it were. And after many years of rebuff, they return, in their old age, beaten and disillusioned.

If you are prone to belong to this crowd, I should advise you at once to do penance - to repent. There is no sense in trying to be superior to your people and to your religion. You can not. You can not condescend to the Rock of Ages. It can not be done.

I, for one, am getting quite weary and tired of this tragic game which is enacted by foolish Jews generation after generation, the young never learning from the old - this game which consists in this - the more money a Jew has and the longer he has it, the less Judaism he has and the more diluted it is.

My first message to you this morning is this: Continue your Jewish study, read, investigate, inquire, acquaint yourselves with all that your people have achieved through the ages, the ideals and the hopes of your people, gather all the knowledge you can in the world, rifle all the store houses of human thought, fill the corners of your mind with all the knowledge you can gather, but leave some room therein for the rich heritage of your own people.

And my second message is of a general character and yet in a way, it is also characteristically Jewish. It is this.

Try to be, as long as you can, a dream bearer. Don't get set in your ways too early. Don't become wrapped up in your own little self too soon. Don't narrow the sweep of your life to your own little career and to your own little successes, too soon. Let youth's generous impulses prompt you to reach out to others, for as long as you can. You will have ample time in later years to be self-centered and ingrown, as most of us become.

Some of you may have been reared in the lap of comfort, and some even in luxury. Your early years may have been sheltered years and amply provided for, you may not know the real world about you, the world of reality. Well my friends, this world is "Rome and London not a fools paradise." There is much poverty and much misery and great want. There is much crime in this world and sin and corruption and injustice. Get to know this world. "Be with Calaban in the coal mine." Be with the poor in the huddled tenements. Learn to understand with sympathy, the desolations of joblessness and unemployment. Try to understand, not only intellectually, what passes through one's mind during the long long hours while a man is waiting in the long long line for a job.

There are a few in this world who are at ease in

Zion. But the many, my friends, the many are still struggling, as they always have, desperately hard, for a chance to earn a living and to earn a little happiness in the world.

Come to know that world. Don't sequester yourself like some of your grown-ups have done, behind a smug bourgeois philosophy and lived there for the rest of their lives.

As long as you are young, be generous, be a dream bearer. Build your castles in the air for as long as you can because you are going to live in your drab dreary flats for many many years. It is good, my friends, for one, for a few brief years, to tramp from star to star, in ecstasy, spiritual buoyancy, - many will be the years in which to walk cautiously as the slow pedestrian walks, the tired man.

I would urge upon young people to sing their song as long as they can because they will have many years in which to speak prose. Perhaps in this age of synicism, materialism, sophistication, one may be ashamed of his dreams. I urge upon you not to be ashamed of your dreams of youth, your hunger for beauty, your passion for justice and righteousness, your disdain of smugness and unctuousness and pompous hypocrisy. Don't be ashamed of that passion of yours. You will have years a plenty in which to be practical and conservative in the world.

In the next twenty or thirty years the world will have to answer the challenge of Russia. Whether it shall be Bolshevism or

an economic reorganization which will give to every man who toils his just due and his just economic security. There is no question about it. The next twenty or thirty years will be your years and you will have to give the answer. That challenging experiment which is now going on in Russia can not be forever confined within the Slavik border. Sooner or later that revolutionary concept will challenge us here and we will have to answer.

In the next twenty or thirty years the world will have to answer the question - peace or war - shall it be increased navies and armies, which have been increasing apallingly since the War, leading to other wars, more disastrous, more horrible, or shall it be peace and disarmament.

These twenty or thirty years will be your years. You will be the masters in the next generation. You will be called upon to give the answer. May you be brave, my friends, courageous, daring enough to give brave, courageous and daring answers to these questions.

I don't know of a generation of young people in the whole history of the human race, that was faced with so many momentous tasks and problems as this generation of which you are a part.

Prepare yourselves for the great task ahead. Prepare yourselves not only intellectually, not only by having a mind which thinks clearly and creatively. Prepare yourselves not only physically by having bodies which are clean, wholesome, sturdy, ready to bear the strain of life. Prepare yourselves spiritually, with daring and

courage and faith so that you may bring to the world that
gift which your elders failed to bring - the gift of peace
and of social righteousness.



1. A pleasure to welcome young men & women ^{our Temple fellowship who have} returned from school for their holiday vacation - and those who ~~have~~ ^{have} at home but not been away ~~but~~ whom we see frequently, but who have joined this rally of our Temple youth to demonstrate the solidarity of our ranks - and the unbroken continuity of Temple allegiance.

2. The Synagogue is the oldest existing rel. institution in the world to-day - older > church or mosque & older than any ^{which boasts} shrine ~~possessing~~ ^{an astonishing} history. It has survived all manner of persecution and a high exodus wandering. It may always find itself ~~surviving~~ ^{in the midst of hostile popu-}lations. Both legal prohibitions and mob violence & intemperance ^{combined to} checked its growth and at times threatened its existence. One can trace the pilgrimage of Israel thru the ages across the face of the earth in the record of ruined & destroyed synagogues - and yet - survived - And it puts the ~~roc~~ - after centuries of sad and uncertain experience, it puts the ~~roc~~ - ^{with} ~~very~~ ^{very} ~~city~~ ^{city} & strong, arrayed in the splendor of beautiful Temple edifices, more beautiful by far > any since the fall, the great national shrine on Mt. Zion - And why? Because always there was a generation of youth to carry on the mission, the Synagogue - Always the J. ~~father~~ parent was able to say to his growing son or daughter "The torch my father gave in trust to me, thy father gives to thee".

3. There is a sentence in ps. 127 which Jew never forgot. p 212
אין אדם יכול לבנות בית אלא ביהוה אלהינו
אין אדם יכול לבנות ארץ אלא ביהוה אלהינו
We had no armies to fight for us - +
no armies with which to protect ourselves - we were defenseless.
But we did forget our weapons, our weapons of growth - we taught
our children into steadfastness and loyalty - and behind that
pattern of our faithful growth we were impregnable.

4. Knowing that our safety lay in possessing ^{always} an educated and inspired
generation of young people, Israel made, the synagogue, a place study
as well as a place of worship - and commanded that every child,
rich or poor, affluent or parentless, shall be educated from in-
fancy in the lore and law, the customs & traditions of his people - Jew-
values & values was accounted the prerogative & liabilities and
a law menace to the perfectibility, the more. The Church in the
Middle Ages did not want the people to read the Bible. It
restricted that privilege to the clergy. The Jew was circumcised
וְכָל בְּרִית אֲבִיכֶם אֵלֶיךָ - The J. was encouraged to study, to
inquire, to question, even to doubt. For our days, we
5. Confident that, while Jews could not
and indifference, it could not only bring that kind of service
and the free intellect. It readily threw its knowledge

5. Our own synagogue - הבית האדום - has carried on this ancient
tradition of our people - We have laid great emphasis
upon the knowledge, just - upon study. Builded a
school & High school which affords a liberal education
to children & youth in the fundamentals of J. thought &
experience - Many & you are great commands

the Temple & graduate, the High School - But that is
not enough - Jud. in the study for life, true, and a
short period in our early youth. - only the present -
will can be laid there. The structure must be reared
later on & throughout our life - Vast is the ocean
of J. that. Many men have run into it and
deposited their precious present upon it.
40 centuries - almost the full span of ^{recorded} human
history - is the calendar of Israel's
life - No high rocky land & in every clime
now drama of J. that is exp. unfolded story -
Every unit pass from our wandering feet.
The Naath, the stained river, the
Gaith - the Jury - the Wish Jordan - Khinn
Naath - the ^{Gō, dāe, swi, ver} Guadalquivir in the Hudson & the
Mun - our our settlements I heard the
account of our voices - Prophet, say, of art,
philosopher and statesman, all poured their
rich treasure, heart & mind - into the life -
stream, meal -

6 - This vast heritage - remarkable with for quantity
& quality - is yours. That the truth your fathers
are handing down to you - There is just there
for life, much for the soul, inspiration for

great deed and a road way, living - It also not turn
from it in your maturing years - as something you
can do without - as something auto-generated - as a
Sunday school project - IP There is in you that
literature that which short the road - do which
carried new high ways & human purposes - purposes
for human justice & peace, which to this day are
the unattained goals of mankind - wisdom which
has guided countless generations men to blindness
and which may guide our our discharge &
scrambled up to blindness and peace - philosophy
which has authored & repeated to Philos. schools
of centuries -

There is in that history - a magnificent mind
our matter of the Jew in the navy, the strength
the idea of peace, which will bring glory to your
mental days -

Doubt, if you must -

7. I am satisfied to have you taste every branch, know -
ledg - to sample every Philos. speculation, to investigate
critically every thing of mind & religion if you
will not keep as per usual as just - if you
will continue to read deeper & deeper into J. sources -
into J. Phil - J. ethics - J. hist - J. liter - J. rel.
contemplation - you will return easily to
the walls which our people dwell - your same thinking

for Israel's good - and Israel's path - and its unshakable
hope -

8. I shall be frank with you - There is one thing which
^{in any} ~~will~~ stand in ^{the way} ~~your way~~ ^{from 2:30} ~~your way~~ a straight forward appraisal
of the Jews - Jews ^{of today} ~~of today~~ ^{with their heritage} ~~with their heritage~~ ^{and} ~~and~~ ^{the well-to-do} ~~the well-to-do~~ ^{class} ~~class~~
come to ~~feel~~ ^{feel} ~~as~~ ^{as} superior to Jew -
~~to feel~~ ^{to feel} ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~their~~ ^{their} ~~ambitions~~ ^{ambitions}, they come to
regard J. contacts as a liability - and! ^{Especially} they
that smack of Jew - as distinctly undesirable -
In an effort to become assimilated gentiles, they are
prone to degrade every thing that ~~is Jewish~~ ^{is Jewish} -
They will avoid the stigma not be. they trust
I found it wanting - not be. they rejected it
they to a rigid intellectual critique I found it
inadequate - but be. it's Jewish - and not
representatively Exclusively

There is no reversal for these, but disillusionment
① Such are to be pitied. They are not new
phenomena in Jew life - They belong to the ancient folk
part apart - in Alexandria - in Rome - in Spain -
in West. Europe ^{we had them} - They work East - in public banking
after things which are false Wair, which do not earn
a cent the like -

② One cannot be if there is among you any such
who feel East for you Jew - This is how to do
remain in apart - the superior to the Synagogue - on causes
Tragi-comedy One wears
conceding to the halakot without losing the heart

You may have been reared in lax comfort or
luxuries - ~~your~~ childhood & youth may have been
sheltered and amply provided for. You may not know
the real world about you. It is Rome & London
not a poor's paradise. There is great poverty
there, travelling & want ~~there~~. There is crime there
and corruption & injustice. The few are at
ease in you. The many are struggling hard
and litting for the chance to live decent & thrift
& happiness. So out I seek you brother!

Be with "Caliban in the coal mine!" Be with
the poor in the huddled tenements. Learn
the truth to understand the degradation of portages
unemployment - the fear of losing a job - the
day, day want in the day, long lines for a chance
to work. Don't request you in the
smug, bourgeois philosophy of your class.
Be young, and brave and generous!

of martyrs, and victims and pompous
Martyrs - Cherish, for as long as you can, the
"sea current" your youth. It is better by
far that no line should be the May, beclouded
^{thunder} ~~dream~~ shot thru with misdeeds, pain & sorrow
than a stale monument of complacency.

10. In ³⁰20 years the world will have to answer
the challenge of Peace - Brish. or Renpang.
- unemployment Insecurity -

11. In ³⁰20 years - challenge War or Peace -
increased arms warfare - death
in peace

12. ~~At~~ These ³⁰20 years will be yours - your creation
yours - you will ^{be called upon to} ~~be~~ answer questions. Be
brave! your burdens - if you will have
shoulders to bear burdens - will be many - but
they will be light to the strength that will be
yours -

13. ~~Be brave - be true - (truth)~~

The Abram - Beamer.

where weary folk toil, black with smoke,
and hear but whistles scream;
I went, all fresh from dawn and dew,
To carry them a dream.

I went to bitter lanes and dark,
who once had known the sky,
To carry them a dream - and found
They had more dreams than I.



-Alevies

9. And along with J. message

① Be a dream - hearer - Get - set - Wrap it up -
narrow your life - Let youth's generous -
self-centered soon enough -

② Beard - May not know - Rome - great poverty -

③ The few are at at ease - Go out -

Be with Caliban - poor - servants -

Learn - desolation & joblessness - long - long wait -

④ Went Sequester (note) -

10- Build your castles - you will live in your dream.

It is good, if only for - to leave from star to star
- So many years remain

Play your song - please

also not be ashamed - of what - enough -

Church "does worst" youth - Both by the
live should be strange, bewildered animal

next page

ABSTRACT OF THE ADDRESS

"AS YOUTH VIEWS THE WORLD"

BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER
THE TEMPLE, DEC. 28th, 1930

Even in this cynical, smart, sophisticated and sad age in which we live, I would advise my young friends not to be ashamed of their dreams, their hunger for beauty, their passion for justice, their impatience with compromise and their disdain of unctuousness and pompous knavery. It is better by far that our lives should be shot through with tumult, impulse, power and courage than drag out as a stale monotone of commonplaces.

I would urge upon young people not to get wrapped up in their own little ambitions too early, not to become careerists and success-seekers too soon. We become self-centered and ingrown soon enough. Let youth's generous heart prompt them to reach out to the great world about them and to their fellowmen.

Some of my young friends have been reared in the lap of comforts and luxuries. Their childhood and early youth have been sheltered and amply provided for. They do not know the real world. It is "Rome and London and not a fool's paradise." There is much poverty there and misery and want. There is great crime there and corruption and injustice. The few are at ease in Zion. The many are struggling today as they always have since the beginning of time, hard and bitterly, for the chance to earn a living and a bit of happiness. I would urge upon my young friends to go out and seek their brothers. Be with "Caliban in the coal mine!" Be with the poor in the huddled tenements! Learn to understand the desolation of joblessness, the long long wait in the

long long lines for a chance to work. Don't sequester yourselves in the smug bourgeois complacency of your class!

I would urge upon my young friends to build their castles in the air for as long as they can. They will live in their dreary flats long enough. Let them tramp from star to star as long as they can. So many years remain in which to walk the slow and cautious pace of spent pedestrians.

In the next twenty or thirty years the world will have to answer the challenge of Russia. Will it be Bolshevism everywhere or a liberal economic reorganization which will give every man who labors his just due and which will protect him against the disabilities of sickness, old age and unemployment. The rising generation will have to answer that challenge.

In the next twenty or thirty years the world will have to answer the challenge of war or peace - increased armies and navies, leading to a series of world catastrophies or swift disarmament. The coming generation will have to answer that question too.

The proper answers will require courage and bravery and intellectual freedom. Is our youth being trained for these tremendous tasks?