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What America has lost since the war, 1931.

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WHAT AMERICA HAS LOST SINCE THE WAR

BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER
AT THE TEMPLE
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1st, 1931

In discussing the subject, my friends, "What America Has Lost Since the War" I should like to remind you of a truism that is often overlooked; that there are no sharp landmarks in history.

One can not say on what day of the month the Industrial Revolution began or feudalism ended, or the Renissance was ushered in. And I am sure that the people living at the time when these movements silently began were quite unaware of them and of the possible consequence that they may have upon their own lives and upon the lives of posterity.

It is only much later, when mankind has had the advantage of looking back over a considerable stretch of time, that it is able to say, at this point cross-roads were reached, at that point the march of human progress took a sharp turn in this direction or in that direction.

But I believe that we are already sufficiently far removed from the days of 1914 and 1917 to warrant in taking a backward look and to conclude, on the basis of what we already see back of us, that the World War, in all likelihood, did mark a very definite turning point in the history of our own people and perhaps of mankind.

The upheaval was so vast and so cataclysmic that it was not only tremendous in extension but tremendous also in penetration,—perpendicular, reaching down into the very department of our national life, into our economic and social life, into our government, religion, art, science, morals - nothing escaped the winnowing of this tremendous event in the history of the world.

And many of us may be entirely unaware of it, but the thoughtful few, I am sure, have already realized that for weal or woe, for better or for worse, the last war has catapulted us into a new and bewildering world, and that we today are in a sense the children of two worlds, and therefore spiritually homeless.

We have been fashioned from a world which has ceased to exist and we have not yet been naturalized citizens of the world which is coming to pass. This new world, ushered in by the war, has not had time to create its own culture, its own codes, its own nores, and therefore it has not had time as yet to give us those sustaining influences which we need in our lives. And therefore this is an age of transition. And therefore this is also a sad age.

The promises of the new world have not yet come to pass but we have already lost some of the compensations of the old world and it is of some of these losses that I want to speak this morning.

I think one of the first things that we lost was our from complacence. People used to call us smug. The Europeans especially used

to call us smug. We weren't smug. But in our days before the war there was a certain tranquility. We were at peace with ourselves. The pre-war American did, in a sense, believe that he was living in the best of all possible worlds. His government was a democracy. And a democracy was the noblest and best form of government for mankind. He knew that there was political corruption in his government, but he wasn't much disturbed about it.— Boys will be boys and politicians will be grafters, so why make much ado about it. His government was still "a government of the people, and by the people and for the people."

Ye had faith in our democratic government and we felt that it/presented the ultimate in political philosophy.

was as sound as a hickory nut; that a beneficent capitalism, unhampered

by government interference was creating great wealth and making everybody

rich; that is everybody who got the lucky break. If everybody was not

rich, everybody was potentially rich who got the lucky breaks. This is was

the land of boundless economic opportunity for everyone; the industrious,

the thrifty, the ambitious were all certain to be rewarded. Rause children with

a difference was still enough of that camaraderie of

frontier days left ever in America and enough of that thought-pattern of

our earlier civilization, the melting pot, and, the haven of refuge, to

give Americans the feeling of social equality and a real faith in tolerance.

And so taken all in all, he was satisfied with his life. He was content with his social setup and often a bit patronizing of European

peoples in spite of their older civilization. They had many of the graces of a mellowed civilization. They had art. But we had modern homes and modern improvements and the best in machinery. We had skyscrapers. We had all the modern fascilities of life. Ours was to all intents and purposes, the best of all possible worlds.

But we are not so complacent in the year 1932. We have not been since the war.

Almost on the heels of the war, there set in, you will recall, a veritable tidal wave of social self-criticism. The symbol of that movement, may be a man by name Sinclair Lewis and his disciples.

American life was stripped of much of its glamour. The American small town - Gopher Prairie, and the American big town - Zenith City, were subjected to a microscopic study and analysis and exposed in all its than drawn drawns.

And then there set in another movement which again may be symbolized by a man by name, Mencken and his cohorts of fallen angels, who set up their own crusade fer the debunkting American life.

As a result of this self-criticism, Europe actually came

to believe as Bernard Shaw expressed quite recently, that America is lujuy

fond of being abused because the are quite ruthless in criticizing

sutellectual masschisms.

ourselves. As a result of all this, there has come into American life

a certain restiveness. Our complacence was gone.

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zeal for democracy. We were so much sold on democracy that we entered the war to make the whole world safe for it. We soon learned that our great gift wasn't really wanted. Many nations were frankly cynical about it, many skeptical, and many people of the were rather indifferent about it.

who were rejectified disdainfully the whole concept of democracy. They called a Municipal Leaves. Save the way for the fall of the same of democracy. They called the state of the fall of

the war of our pride and confidence in our economic setup. The perfervid

what was

faith which we had in the power of capitalism to make everybody to the at that two the econ were a cap was lighted to wall as the helief in the rich received its major defeat in the year 1929. It wasfound number of fun. The system of 2 cars for favoity sets was fruit to end in break for much and confetances of workship that increased wealth does not of necessity make for increased lines. The system lagexpeared in all it wasterliness. opportunity or for greater economic cocurity for the great masses of the people. Here we are in 1932 -It was found, for example, during the year 1929, that

a nation possessed of forty percent of the gold resources of mankind, whose soil has been more than generous, whose bins are glutted with wheat, - in a land possessed of the best of engineering brains and with the best of machinery, - in the midst of such a land, fire millions funitionis of people are forced out of work and driven to the only resources which

we were able to put at their disposal, doles, charity, bread lines form - new soup kitchens, and the homilies and encouraging words of Galvin Coolidge. The form this, slater to seem and for later - or missioner reserves.

We are no longer secure in our economic philosophic and the later - or missioner reserves. We are no longer secure in our economic philosophy. Com - carry for at

Across the border, figuratively speaking, is Russia. fear in Russia is not that it is dumping products upon our shores. all the feet What we fear in Russia is something more dangerous and serious, - the undermining of er confidence in our own economic philosophy. Thus een

and fool to day we are not rebels, only herflers agnostres -And then too, I believe that we lost a good deal since the

m. Clearly the trend of the economic life since the war in individualism. war has been more and more in the direction of corporate organization, of consolidation, mass - structu

1. Common

Before the war we feared the trusts and anathamatized them and sought to circumvent them by legislation. Today we change asur growing the name trust to merger and we are watches today these octopuses of wolushy as least ut to zg. mergers. There is no malediction in our hearts. We are watching Menn The conficult org. slefi with almost admiration. Perhaps it is unavoidable. I believe it is unavoidable. But clearly unavoidable is it too, that with this process the individual will be more and more drawn into vast, impersonal The ena of the swarl midale-war is closing organizations and instead of being an independent, self-determined businessman, will become a dependent, regimented agent of the huge impersonal organizations. The middle class is being wiped out and wiped out not by a public socialism such as exists in Russia, but by a capitalistic socialism.

In Russia the individual has been ragooned into a system.

Russia, as you know, embarked upon a tremendous scheme of socialization.

But there the motif is not pecuniary profits, but one vast machine with some planning commission at the head, directing. But there is this a significant difference between what is going on in Russia and what is going on in this country: In the first place, in Russia, the thing is on the surface, clearly visible and acknowledged. The process is understood,—

controlled and the masses are being educated to see in this process of paralication eventually, an ultimate good for themselves.

In our country, the process is going on beneath the surface

do not foresee the implications and consequences of it.

No is the process

In the second place there is this difference. In

White from a paradicular of a deal.

Russia men are being standardized in the name of an ideal. The

Ideal is a perfect communal life in which all men shall share in

the good things of life. They are doing what they are doing with the an ideal of creating a genuine community life, built on a

solidarity and unity of interest from which the element of profit will be

eliminated.

Now they may not succeed. That is not the point at
the present. The point is that a succeed, the movement has been inaugurated
having a definite philosophy and a definite objective. For the liberties
and the individual freedom of which Russians are being deprived, they
are being given the ideal of a perfect society which they have to
establish, in which the few will not be exalted at the expense of
the many, but from which the gelfort, further than the forever barrely the perfect of the property than the forever barrely and the

In our land we are being standardized without being socialized. The profit motif is bringing about this solidification the and there are no social ideals to compensate men for the loss of individual freedom which they will have to sacrifice in the days to come.

I think too, that we lost since the war a good be of our tolerance. You recall that immediately after the war we were visited by clanism, by Fordism, by a rabid chauvinistic hundred per cent annual.

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after the war we succumbed to someth nationalistic pseudo-scientific race which but a war want with but a war was a few of and a few or a few or and a few or a few or

Now, the American before the war was not a perfect man by any means. But there was in American life a spaciousness, a tolerance. The stranger was welcomed into the life of the American people. We praised many a lad who succeeded, and spoke with pride of the New World, built not on blood but on ideals. We still clung to the ideal of "the haven of refuge." We dreamt of a new world to be fashioned on these shores. A good bit of that tolerance is gone from American life.

And lastly, I believe, that we have lost considerable of our moral certitude. Our morality before the war was much more simple and straight-forward. We weren't saints before the war by any means, but we had definite moral convictions and we tried to live up to them.

There were mountain peaks toward which we looked and aspired. We didn't always attain them. But today the peaks have been levelled by the valleys. The power of conviction has passed with some of our moral ideals. We have begun to laugh at some of them.

Now a people that laughs at itself is a sound people; a

people that laughs at its gods is a diving people. A people must have

certain bears in its life around which to feed energy lacking these,

there is a chaos. And there is chaos in our moral life today. You see

that in your literature, in your theatres, in your increasing crime, and junction

increasing divorce. You see that in all the new experiments which are

being offered family relationships and in all of the caperings of the youth of our day.

I think that our youth today is a very sad youth.

I know of no youth today that is happy except the youth of Russia.

Not because they have the good things that our young people have.

They have not. They are happy because there is something in their lives that is greater than themselves, beyond themselves and above themselves. They feel privileged that somehow destiny has selected them to be the molders of the new world. They may be utterly deluded. But there is that ideal in their lives and that ideal gives a lift, an enthusiasm and a glow to their lives that our young people haven't got. There is no central was philary in the life of our youth today. They are sick and that's why they are really desparately seeking for some satisfactions in life.

It is not that our young people are in revolt. Our young people haven't revolted. A revolt my friends implies an upreaching, a yearning for the freer spaces of the spirit and for a nobler way of living won through a firmer self-discipline. That's a revolt. Mere self-indulgence and sowing of wild oats, mere lack of restraint and the vulgarization of speech, manners and conduct, may be revolting. They are not a revolt.

in our lives today. Neither the home, nor the school, nor the church, nor the government exercises today an authority in the life of people and so people are thrown back upon themselves.

And they, themselves, are not always the best guides for themselves.

There are very few people who are such clear thinkers, who have had enough of the experience of life, to be their own guides

through life. The masses of the people need some authority to look up to, some source that is definite and brystallized, to look up to a some source that is definite and brystallized, to look up to and men are thrown back either on wilfulness or upon external economic pressure, which still does exercise a certain controller influence upon men.

I have indicated some of the losses which we have sustained in passing from one world to another. We are children of the twilight. The twilight which not the night but the dawn. The new age may bring us compensations. I believe it has already brought us some compensations. I can think of four which it has brought us.

and what is more important, - more of scientific idealism. I don't
know if you have grasped the full implication of it. Stell the houseman scientific with the whether, who are an analytication of it. I the houseman scientific was the steer and the second of the second

and an unprecedented hunger after beauty, expressed in cities themselves, in architecture and in music.

There is today no stronger impetus to faith than in the books of modern science. And men like Dr. Millikin are doing more for faith, for the recovery of our faith in our relatedness to this universe, in the feeling that we belong here, that our values are somehow related to exotic values; that life is more than a machine- there, no greater source for implications for such things than in the text-books of modern science, - a real gain, I think.

Another gain is that we have become more inter-national minded. We are more interested today in what is going on in India, in China than we were before. We have become part and parcel of a world community. We have stretched out the antenna of our lives to truck the further decrees the earth.

### it will make possible more and more of mankind.

minded. Certainly this generation of ours will never forget the last war with its spiritual and physical scars. Our hope is that our children who did not know the war may profit from what we saw, what we know of war. But be that as it may, there is more talk and more thought in the world today about the machinery for effecting world peace than at any time in the history of mankind. Heretofore peace has been an ideal abstraction. But necessity and the events of the last two or three generations have thrust this abstraction into the realm of practical politics and have turned it into the most pressing and per\_

And a solution will be found and the Twentieth Century find the solution. Author thewder who chover world peace.

It has been an aesthetic. Our cities are lovlier,

our homes more beautiful, finer ambitions, better music. More of us

listen to better music today than at any time in the past. I think

we are beginning to have some of the graces and charm of the older

Way attribute frame is consequent to have afficient with the spartam efficient wild.

civilization. And that's a distinct gain. Other gains may follow.

The next epoch may perhaps far exceed ours.

There is always the consolation of the great teacher of the Bible, Koheleth - (quote Hebrew)

"One generation goes, another generation comes, but the world goes on forever."

sermon 344 D I there are no sharp land wark in history. Our cannot say or what day of the worth the molies. Red. hejan, n atte perdaleren anded, o with the Renausaire was whered in - when I am how that the people win in the main the people in the main where at the term then they change of coursel were nothing over a score much shetch flushing that the ware of all to derice that at soul of well a point, hustry. 2, this patocista while this want such a turning point and tustoy will note it - The uphant un so vast-To carpelining that it reffect was not any Exten I val - wede-spread, but perfuelentar- receany life nothing escaped its winning put, Elen, rel. - art - surals -. Many sus an unusa, who was roy fut pucks us into a new used theireden uned - a new cycle line steadale & unes - are in a repres for how

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What we Have Lost here the War? 1. In discussing - truism - no sharp 49 Landmarks in his tory. One cannot say on what day Industrial Rev - Fendalism - Kruaisan - grute unaware - consequences D-9t is only much later - at this to point - cross-roads - march (3) But I believe that - sufficiently removed 1914-1917. condition to warrant us in taking back-ward - conclude def. turning point in our hest. 2. Upheaval was so vast - tomendous in extension - seached - no thing escaped winnowing Oand the many are still unaway - cataquetad- new world - children y 2 worlds - +: Sp. humber (2) Barrished from a world - classed - not naturalized - convey to tacs - not had truis to create our coole -:... 9, 18 us sustaining without

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Fools gold-after after goodom.

J. Lost our Crusading Faith (in Wemerary)

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### "FOR YOU, O DEMOCRACY"

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,
I will make divine magnetic lands,
With the love of comrades,
With the life-long love of comrades.

\* \* \*

"LONG, TOO LONG, AMERICA"

Long, too long, America,
Travelling roads all even and peaceful you learn'd from
joys and prosperity only,
But now, ah now, to learn from crises of anguish,
advancing, grappling with direst fate and recoiling not,
And now to conceive and show to the world what your children
en-masse really are,
(For who except myself has yet conceiv'd what your children
en-masse really are?)

From "Leaves of Grass" and "Democratic Vistas" by Walt Whitman

Adams Degradation of the Democratic Dogma

"Social war or massacre would seem to be the natural ending of the democratic philosophy. Democracy is the system of fools or of levelling downward. Democracy has insisted on degrading the public service to a common level of incapacity... Democracy has failed to justify itself" -

### Modes and Morals

"The first cause of the gradual extirpation of culture among us is this: the increased hold of the democratic fallacy on the public mind" -

## Nietzsche

"Everyone being allowed to read, ruineth in the long run not only writing but also thinking" -

The gloomy dean of St. Paul who is a minister and should be a booster - for the ministry is the Babbit among professions - is in despair (Outspoken Essays)

# Remy de Gourmont

"The only absolutely necessary laws are natural laws...In the case of social and political evolution, not only are there no necessary laws, but there are no very general laws even... If certain empires have died of sickness or of old age - the greater number, on the contrary, have succumbed to violent death in the plenitude of their physical power, in the full force of their intellectual vigor" -