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Suffering and death, 1932.

374

"SUFFERING AND DEATH"

BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER  
AT THE TEMPLE  
SUNDAY, FEB. 14th, 1932

There are many kinds of suffering to which mortal man is heir. The greatest of these is not physical suffering. Sickness and pain afflict all men at some time or other and some men are called upon to suffer torments.

Medical science has gone far in relieving man of his pain by curing the malady which causeth the pain or if any cure is impossible, in deadening the pain. Courage, fortitude and patience while they are not antidotes to pain are nevertheless great allies in helping man to master his pain.

I have known men and women who were afflicted with life-long afflictions, with total blindness or total paralysis and who were yet able to derive a large measure of contentment from life. Others whose afflictions were far less severe became so embittered as to derive nothing but bitterness and unhappiness from life.



Physical suffering is of course the sharpest, most vivid and instant kind of suffering. But I question whether it is as wide-spread as the other kind of suffering, the mental and the spiritual kind, the kind which corrodes the very substance of the inner life of a man, - worry, defeat, disillusionment, bereavement, unrequited love and a whole sad catalogue of human suffering whose source is not physical.

These are terrifically real kinds of suffering because a man lives not in his body principally, but in his emotions, his desires, his hopes and his longings. In that psycho physical world which is man, of which the body is only a part, and not the most important part, what ailment for example is comparable to that ailment which we call a heart-ache, which eats and consumes all the vigor and joyance of life and ultimately undermines the very foundation of living.

I am not now referring to the abnormal maladies of the human spirit. I am not referring to that which is morbid or pathological, the neuroses and the psychoses of sick people, to those ailments which require clinical attention. I am referring to normal people who are called upon to bear those heavy loads of life which frequently break them. Physical suffering has to be of the most extreme kind to break a man.



I have known many people who have gone under when life collapsed through mental and physical anguish. Here is a parent who has been dishonored by his child; here is a man who has been betrayed by his friend; here is a mother who has lost her child; here is a man whom life has defeated; here is another who is being ground down by poverty; here is a third who feels himself persecuted by implacable enemies. A whole army of normal human beings who suffer deeply to the very roots of their being.

Now every great religion and every great system of philosophy has a message for such troubled hearts, and particularly Judaism, ancient and wise with the wisdom of years.

Judaism is a very realistic religion. It faces facts. It does not create fictions to soften the harsh reality of things. Judaism is not a demulcent theosophy which blightly and cheerily proclaims that all human suffering is but imagination, the product of the mortal mind of man. Judaism is not very much impressed with that theology which maintains that evil is negative, that evil does not exist with God; that evil is only relative to man, which is of course true, but which is only cold comfort to those who suffer and are passing through great tribulations.



Judaism accepts and acknowledges the sad frustrations and limitations of human life. One of its greatest texts, the book from which I read this morning, portrays man in his hour of agony both mental and physical. Judaism knows that "man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and withereth. He fleeth as a shadow and continueth not."

Judaism knows of the passions, of the weariness, of the vanity, of the horrors and the tribulations of human life and it therefore offers no philosophy of shallow optimism to man, no Pollyanna philosophy of life. We don't find that in our texts. Life is not a Fool's Paradise. Happiness is not always within the reach of man nor is it ever continuous. And the most contented and most righteous frequently are called upon to suffer grief, sorrow and bitterness through life.

But on the other hand Judaism refuses to surrender itself to a philosophy of hopeless pessimism. Unlike Hinduism, Judaism does not believe that life is inherent in its very texture, hopeless. Judaism does not say that human suffering is meaningless, nor does it disparage civilization, progress, nor the dignity or worth of man, the value of his striving and struggles. For the world, to Judaism, is not the result of a fatal accident, as it is to the



Hindu. Nor is it the result of some irrational and inscrutable necessity as it was to the Greeks. To Judaism, the world and all that is in it, is the creation of the will of a wise and intelligent God, who meant life to be just what it is, who meant human life to be just what it is, - light and shadow, joy and sorrow and pain. And human life, in the mind of the wise and beneficent Creator, was meant to be according to Judaism, a struggle against evil and ignorance, a struggle against the lower and an upreaching towards the higher. And the whole significance of human life lies in the struggle. And all the satisfactions of human life derive from the struggle. Therefore Judaism sought to train men to prepare themselves for the struggle. Courage, fortitude, resoluteness, patience, hate, these are the means by which the soldier of the spirit equips himself for the inevitable struggle of existence. The resolute heart, the stiff upper lip, yes, even the clenched fist, - but always carry on. That's the teaching of our faith.

The Stoics of ancient Greece and Rome preached the philosophy of ancient Judaism. On this point the great Seneca was found to say (quote Greek) "It is great and noble to have the frailty of a man and the security of a God."

Judaism taught man, in his hours of struggle and suffering, to face reality, to see suffering as it is, for what it



is, not to deny it, not to over-estimate it, not to yield to it. And that's the important thing, -courage and hope.

"Why art thou cast down, oh my soul?" "Hope in the Lord." "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever."

In the midst of suffering to be able to hope that light will follow the darkness, that's an act of will. And man must learn how to exercise his will so that in the hour of danger, in the hour of peril, when he is attacked by misfortune, by suffering, physical and spiritual, he will be able to withstand the onslaught and come out the victor.

From this point of view, my friends, which is to my mind a very sane and practical point of view, Judaism was able to reveal to man that suffering is not without its moral compensation. Those men who are not rebellious and those who are not crushed by suffering may derive a measure of strength and a full measure of wisdom from their own trials and tribulations.

Gold is tried by the fire. The eyes of men, my friends, see more clearly after they have been washed by tears. The hearts of men beat more truly after they have been pinched by anguish and tried by sorrow. The lips of men speak more kindly after they have tasted the cup of life's bitterness. Insight comes from plumbing



depths. I know of men and women who have been drawn together by common sorrow and common bereavement, as they have not been drawn together spiritually in life before. The wise may learn from their own suffering.

Recently I read in a book of verse written by Lizette Woodworth Reese, a poet of great talent and profound insight, a group of sonnets dedicated to a little girl, little Henrietta, a four year old child who had died. She was the delight of the home and all things lived in her presence. And when she died the light of life went out for all who loved her and darkness settled upon their habitations. She writes:

"Was life henceforth to be but days, days, days,  
That a few hundreds make into a year?  
Like coins to measure out with bargaining hand,  
Enough for roof, cloak, so much weight of bread?  
Had we been stripped for this and nothing more?  
For nothing more at all?  
Yet what was lodging without loveliness?  
Cloak without laughter, loaf without a song?  
Could one brief grave out in the autumnal wet,  
Serve us such scarceness, strip us down to this?

We could not bear to see in the old grass,  
In the old walled yard, her new little grave.  
We could not bear it. Had we left her there,  
To kin with cold oblivion and the dark,  
Kept from her lovers and the good stout sun,  
And all the spinning year?  
Trapped underground to dole her April out  
For some end of the hard and aged dust?  
We could not bear it. One cry broke from all:  
"My God, my God, You have forgotten us!"



And thus they walked down their road of sorrow,  
groping in the dark, seeking some comfort and solace in their  
hour of bereavement. And it comes to them. And the poet closes  
on this high note:

"Old days are over, and old sorrows gone;  
The unchimneyed fields, the the low mellowed house  
Set for a century in the four great winds  
Are perished with the nine trees in the lane.  
Yet still those quiet levels hold her grave,  
Old, now, in the old grass,  
A little sad. What have we kept of all? -  
That love, being lit of God, fails not or ends;  
That years are but His way to make us climb;  
And tears His way to make us understand."

"That years are but His way to make us climb and  
tears His way to make us understand."

And what is true of suffering my friends, is true  
also of death. Some men fear death. More men fear dying. For  
we have surrounded death with that which is dark and gruesome.  
Still more men fear, not their death or their dying, but the  
death and dying of their dear ones. That, of course, is the most  
tragic point of all fear. That belongs to the realm of suffering  
of which I have spoken, for which only courage and faith are man's  
allies.

Normal people seldom brood over death. The life  
impulse is too strong and drives the thought of death out of our



consciousness. Even the dangerously sick people think less of death than we imagine and also the very old are quite reconciled to it and frequently welcome the swift consummation of their days. I have seldom stood at the bedside of the dying and beheld a dying man fear death. Nature somehow supplies a merciful narcosis which precedes death.

How does every great religion, every great system of philosophy, how does our own religion teach men to meet death? Well, in resignation, in nobility, with pride, with hope - with resignation.

An eminent Rabbi was once asked what should one say to mourners when calling upon them for condolence. And he said this: "Brothers bowed down in grief and suffering, put your ears to this consideration, this fact endures forever; it is a road which began with creation and will end with it. Many have drunk of this cup and many will drink of it, as with the first so with the last. May the Father of Consolation console you."

There is in this statement of the Rabbi a calm and almost proud resignation to that which is inevitable. Our sacred literature teaches us and our faith has taught us from our very youth to look upon death as we look upon life, as part of the cycle of existence. We bring our days to an end as a tale that is told. "Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return."



To face death with resignation and to face it with nobility as one who apprehends some stupendous natural phenomenon, as one who sees something solemn and magnificent; to face death with pride, with the pride of one who has finished the task which was assigned to him, who has performed his duty to the best of his ability, who has persisted though the road was hard, to the pride of one who knows that he leaves after him a memory and a name; to face death with hope, as one who knew hope in life and will not lose it in death, as one who knows that God is the God of the living but also the God of the dead; as one who can say unto himself, "Ye though I walk through the shadow of the valley of death, I shall fear no evil for Thou art with me."

That is how our religion teaches us to face death, with resignation, with pride, with hope. Our religion has not made great emphasis on the doctrine of immortality. There is much less of the doctrine of immortality in ancient Israel than in modern Israel. The great ancient books have no definite teachings on the subject of immortality. The immortality of ancient Israel was built upon the here and not the hereafter. All the values of life had to be weighed in the balance of this mundane existence and had to be vindicated upon this earth.



In ancient times the group life of a people was tremendously strong and the individual was absorbed by the group. He did not think particularly of his own survival. It was enough for him to know that his group, his people, would endure. There was in ancient Israel, as among all peoples in ancient times, some belief in the nonperishability of man. Man has always refused to accept his own total annihilation. He could not conceive of it. He still is unable to conceive of it. But the existence of man after death, in the conception of our forefathers in ancient times was a sort of sad existence in the netherworld, a world of eternal silence, a world from which there is no returning. It was not a world of bliss or happiness or judgment or of horror. It was just existence and nothing more.

But the doctrine of immortality gained among our people with the centuries. It grew in the minds of our people. As the individual man discovered more and more his own personality and began to yearn more and more for his own personal survival, as the race began to realize that righteousness is not always vindicated on this earth and evil not always punished; as the Messianic hope of the people for the Kingdom of Righteousness on this earth failed of realization and people



began to think of the netherworld where these wrongs would be righted, where a balance would be established, where that which is crooked will be made straight. And so the doctrine of immortality, only the traces of which we find in the Bible, grew among our people with the Persian and the Greek influence. And with the Rabbis of the Middle Ages we already find a well defined doctrine of immortality which has become and now is an important teaching of Judaism. Namely, that the soul of man is an entity of its own, deriving its eternal being from God and therefore survives the dissolution of this physical body and continues its life uninterrupted.

But this should be said of the doctrine of immortality; among the best minds of our people it is a hope and a mystery. They claim to know very little about the nature of that survival. The hereafter, to the great minds of Israel, is not a place of sensual, physical enjoyment, as it is in the Koran, the teachings of the Mohammedans. It is a place of spiritual enfoldment, a place where the mind and soul of man continues its endless, unquenchable quest of perfection.

(quote Hebrew) "The Righteous have no peace and have no rest either in this world or in the next world."



"They go from strength to strength." From one level of being to another, from one reach of perfection to another." That is the concept of immortality among the best minds of our people.

And so we are taught, my friends, to face death with resignation, with nobility, with pride, with hope. Death is sad only when we have missed all the meaning and all the beauty of existence. Death, my friends, is sad only when we go to our graves not having climbed the heights which we might have climbed, not having become what we might have been, not having raised the banners which we might have unfolded.

Death, my friends, is sad when we go down to our graves with regrets, regrets for joys which we might have shared, for love which we might have given, for beacons which we might have kindled. Death is sad, very sad, when the portals of the grave close over us and we leave no memory behind us, no one to ask and no one to answer who and what we were, no trace to mark our passage through time, no echo to hold, if only for a moment, the ardent song of our heart. That's when death is sad. Otherwise death is not sad. It is the consummation of our days, the harvest which follows the seed-time, the fall and the winter which follows the spring and the summer. One of the most beautiful phrases of our Sages which I am fond of repeating when I stand beside dear ones who have loved and lost is (quote Hebrew) "The righteous, the good, are alive even in death, for no one is dead until he has been forgotten."



<sup>There are</sup>  
1. Many kinds - Sickness and pain affect - Medical Science  
Courage - I have known - Phys. Suffering - sharpest -  
Phys. Suffering - must be - extreme - mental + sp. - corrodes - worry

2. These are terrific - real - For man lives not - What human  
achievement is comparable - heartache - vigor + joyance -

3. I am not referring to the abnormal malachis of human sp.  
morbid - pathos - neuroses - I refer to normal people -  
load - Here is a parent - friend - mother -  
defeated - persecuted - an endless army - drained

4. Every great Rel. - school of phil. - has a message - troubled  
hearts - Judaism, part. ancient, has such

① J. is realistic - faces - set up fictions - Not a  
dominant theory blithely - charact. - all human self

② To say that Evil is negative - frd. - by the great  
cold comfort

③ J. frankly acknow. + accepts "hard destiny's"  
Knows limitations - Job - Supreme hour of agony

"Man born pernian..." flower - within it - the flesh  
as a shadow + continually rest

Knows pain, pain, pain, barren, warmer, vacuities

④ Eschews all shallow optimism, Polyanna -  
Life is not Fools Paradise - Happiness is never  
+ most contented -



- ⑦ Suffering is i. Compensation - Those who are not  
 rebellious - crushed. strength -  
 - Gold is tried by Fire  
 - Eyes - Hearts beat - Lfs - Curryat  
 - Bevarkment has drawn -  
 - Prem (50 Juth)

5/ And so with Death.

Some fear D - lying - death & dear ones.

Most tragic -

Normal people - brood -

Even rich - Old -

I have stood - A merciful narcosis

(1) How does our Rel. teach us to meet D

(a) Compensation (b) Wolichy (c) Pride (d) Hope.

(2) Rel is calm, conf. origin.

Our Sacred Text - from youth - inevitable -

"We bury our years" -

על שנת

(3) With Wolichy - angust mystery - Stafend. Nat. pher

(4) " Pride - finished - performed, perusted -  
leaves name



⑤ On the other hand - surrendered to hopeless pessimism  
unlike Holocaust - inherently evil shapes - Wandering the  
Heaven not ~~spare~~ dispareze civilization - values - progress -  
depravity -

⑥ For the World, to God, is not - fatal accident - But  
irrational and insurmountable necessity - fruits -

Creation & curse - God want -

Human life is a struggle against evil -

Its tyrannous lies - Satisfaction -

Have God. Admonished - trans Eas - courage -

→ "The resolute heart.... carry on!"

It is true weakness - frailty; a man

"Vere magnum, habere fragilitatem hominis  
semitatem vero"

→ Courage - and Faith - אמונה ודאגה -

Faith is an act, will - Beber - god - Wander -

Heber -

"My flesh and my heart fail  
But God is the rock, my heart  
And my portion for ever"











whole again clinical treatment. I refer  
to the usual people, and to load & sorrow  
and anguish, which they are frequently called  
upon to bear. Here is a parent whose child  
deserted him. Here is a man whose friend be-  
trayed him. Here is a mother who lost her  
child. Here is a man whose life defeated.  
Here is another ground down by poverty. Here  
is still another persecuted by his enemies -  
an eviler among & suffering people, for whom  
life is drained of all happiness.

4. Every great vol. Every great school of phil. has  
a remedy for <sup>such</sup> troubled hearts. Judaism,  
especially, <sup>ancient</sup> ~~old~~ <sup>year</sup> ~~year~~ <sup>times</sup> with the wisdom  
of age, has ~~spoken~~ <sup>spoken</sup> its message. ~~the~~  
~~the~~ ~~message~~

(a) Jud. is a realistic rel - It faces life squarely.  
It does not set up pictures to soften the harsh  
reality of things. It is not a demerol itself,  
obliquely & cheerily denying the existence of evil -  
and ~~calling~~ characterizing all human suffering as  
the ~~evils~~ of the mortal mind. <sup>is negative</sup> ~~that it~~

(b) To say that Evil ~~does not~~ <sup>is negative</sup> ~~exists~~ with food  
and is only relative to man, is to beg the question  
and to offer cold comfort to suffering hearts.

(c) Jud. frankly acknowledges & honestly accepts



the hard destiny of war. It shows the limitations & the  
frustration of human life. In our, the immortal  
books of the Bible & of Job - ~~for example~~ <sup>for example</sup> - show man  
in his supreme <sup>human</sup> agony, physical and spiritual.  
It knows that "War that is born of a woman is of  
few days, and full of trouble." It cometh forth like a  
flower, and withereth, it flourisheth as a shadow and con-  
tinueth not." It knows the passions, the horrors,  
the brutalities, the wrongs and the varieties of  
human experience. It sees facts.

(d) And it <sup>just</sup> rebukes any shallow optimism - any  
 Pollyanna phil. of life. It is not a false  
paradise - Happiness is never continuous  
and the most contented lives have their  
dark hours and days of sorrow, bitterness  
and grief.

(e) On the other hand it never succumbed to  
the hopeless phil. of pessimism. Unlike Hinduism  
it does not write human life down as inherently  
evil and hopeless. It does not speak of "the burden  
of existence", or the burden of freedom, the nat.  
cause of <sup>their</sup> ~~existence~~. It does not despise anything,  
nor human values, nor progress, nor the dignity  
of man -

(f) For the world, to Job, is not the product  
of some fatal accident, or blind blows, nor of some  
natural and irresistible necessity, or the



He believed. It is the waters of life and  
~~unhappy~~ God. God meant life to be what it is,  
 And ordained that human life shall have  
 its light & shadow, its joys & sorrows. ~~The~~  
 life is a struggle against evil, suffering <sup>and</sup> grief.  
 Its significance lies in this struggle. Its  
 satisfactions come from manfully fighting  
 the good fight. Hence God commands men  
 to train themselves in courage, fortitude &  
 patience, <sup>in order</sup> that they may play a manly  
 role in a struggle with <sup>evil</sup> ~~man~~ <sup>struggle</sup>.  
 Suffering is not always without its <sup>moral</sup> compensations. Those who are not rebellious, or  
 comforted by it, may derive strength and wisdom  
 from it. <sup>God is first by fire.</sup> Eyes see more  
 clearly when washed by tears. Heart beat  
 more true when sympathy meets human  
 kind, when anguish dwelt there. Lips  
 speak more largely - that have tasted  
 the cups of sorrow. <sup>For it came from</sup>  
 blueberry depths. <sup>has drawn</sup> (Poem. ~~SS~~) <sup>went near</sup>



Service

The resolute heart, the stiff upper lip, if need be, the  
clenched fist - but carry on! It is time matters - to  
have in one the frailty of a man & the security of a God.  
~~But~~ Courage, and faith! כִּדְבָלָא בְּדָמָא - Faith is

An act of will. Will to believe that somehow good will  
come of ill - damn will follow the unjust - God will not  
abandon you:

"My flesh and my heart faileth -  
But God is the rock of my heart and  
my portion for ever."

Vere magnum habere fragilitatem hominis  
securitatem illei -













"Let death and exile and every other thing which appears dreadful be ~~daily~~ before your eyes; but most of all death; and you will never think of anything mean nor will you desire anything extravagantly." -

ps. 73

256. 19

Resurrection

$\frac{1}{2} \int_0^1 \frac{1}{x} dx = \frac{1}{2} \ln 2$

ואתם היצורים והמבאשים אתם הנה! אתם אומרים שיש  
אלה היו עוברים, לפיכך, נחיה בזה המלך ונניח כבוד לזה  
היוזם ולזה - כדוגמה האלהים כי ואלה אחיכם-אומרים  
על נחמנו ונתן לנו חיים  
- עפ"י אלו ואין ספק גמול



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WRHS









Sermon  
374

AN ABSTRACT OF THE ADDRESS

"SUFFERING AND DEATH"

BY

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER  
SUNDAY, FEB. 14th, 1932.

There are many kinds of suffering to which mortal man is heir and the greatest of these is not physical suffering. Physical suffering is the sharpest, most vivid and instand of human suffering, but not the most wide-spread nor yet the most tragic.

Physical pain must be of the most extreme kind to break a man, but many men go under because of mental and spiritual suffering, the kind that corrodes the inner substance of man - worry, defeat, disillusion, betrayal, bereavement and unrequited love. No ailment is quite comparable to a heart-ache which consumes the vigor and joyance of life and undermines its foundations.

Every great religion and every great school of philosophy has a message for suffering mankind. Judaism, particularly, ancient and wise with a wisdom of years has such a message.

Judaism is a realistic religion. It faces life squarely. It is not a demulcent theosophy Blightly and cheerily denying the existence of evil. It knows the hard destiny of man. It knows all of his limitations and frustrations. In the character of Job, the Bible shows man in his supreme hour of agony both physical and spiritual. It knows of the passions, the tribulations, weariness and vanities of human existence.



Judaism therefore eschews any shallow optimism, any Pollyanna philosophy of life. Life is not a fools paradise. Happiness is not always within the reach of man, nor is it ever continuous. The best and most deserving have their dark hours of sorrow and bitterness.

On the other hand Judaism never surrendered itself to the hopeless philosophy of pessimism. Unlike Hinduism it does not write human life down as inherently evil. It does not hold that all human suffering is meaningless. Nor does it disparage human values, progress, civilization or the dignity and worth of man.

For the world, to Judaism, is not the product of some fatal accident nor yet of some irrational or some unescapable necessity as the Greeks believed. It is the creation of a wise and beneficent God, who meant life to be just what it is and who ordained that human life shall be what it is, a compound of light and shadows, of joys and sorrows. Human life is a struggle against evil, suffering and ignorance. Its total significance lies in this struggle and all its satisfactions come from manfully fighting the good fight.

Judaism set out to train men in the qualities of courage, fortitude, patience and high hope so that they will be equipped for the inevitable struggle of existence.

Judaism also revealed to man that suffering is not without its moral compensations. Those who are not rebellious or crushed by it may derive strength and wisdom from their tribulations.

Gold is tried by fire. Eyes see more clearly after they have been washed by tears. Hearts beat more truly after they have been pinched with anguish. Lips speak more lovingly after they have tasted of the cup of sorrow.



Our religion has always taught men to face death with resignation, with nobility, with pride and with hope. Resignation because death is inevitable; nobility because death is a stupendous national phenomenon; pride because we approach it as one who has finished bravely his allotted task; with faith, because we enter its doors as men who knew hope in life and will not lose it in death.

To the best minds of our people immortality is a hope and a profound mystery as is life and mind and being. They did not conceive of the hereafter as a place of sensual enjoyment or perpetual bliss but rather as a condition of spiritual existence where the soul of man continues its endless unquenchable quest for protection.

"The righteous have no peace either in this world or in the next, but they go from strength to strength."

Death is sad only when we have missed life, when the beauty and meaning of life have eluded us. Death is sad only when we failed in life to become what we might have been, to have climbed heights we might have climbed. Death is sad only when we carry to our graves records of years filled with nothingness, of joys we might have shared, of banners we might have raised. Death is sad only when we leave no memory behind us, no one to ask and to answer who and what we had been, no trace to mark our passage through time and no echo to hold, if only for a moment, the ardent song of our hearts.

For all others death is a consummation and an ingathering.



191279

~~January 24~~

④

SUFFERING AND DEATH

Sermon, The Temple, February 14, 1932

There are many kinds of suffering to which mortal man is heir. The greatest of these is not physical suffering. Sickness and pain afflict all men at some time or other, and some men are called upon to suffer torments.

Modern Medical science <sup>can often relieve man</sup> has gone far in relieving man of his pain by curing the malady which <sup>has</sup> caused the pain or, if <sup>by</sup> any cure is impossible, ~~is~~ deadening the pain. Courage, fortitude, and patience, while they are not antidotes to pain, are nevertheless ~~great~~ allies in helping man to master his pain.

I have known men and women ~~who were afflicted~~ with life-long afflictions, with total blindness or total paralysis, ~~and~~ who were yet able to derive a <sup>great</sup> ~~large~~ measure of contentment from life. Others whose afflictions were far less severe became so embittered as to derive nothing <sup>from life</sup> but ~~bitterness~~ <sup>resentment</sup> and unhappiness, ~~from life~~.



~~2~~

Physical suffering is of course the sharpest, most vivid ~~and instant~~ kind of suffering. But I question whether it is as wide-spread as the other kind of suffering, the mental and the spiritual kind, ~~which~~ which corrodes the very substance of the inner life of a man, <sup>the</sup> worry, defeat, disillusionment, bereavement, unrequited love, and a whole sad catalogue of human suffering whose source is not physical.

These are <sup>terribly</sup> ~~terrifically~~ real kinds of suffering, because a man lives not in his body principally, but in his emotions, his desires, his hopes, and his longings. In that psycho-physical world which is man, of which the body is only a part, and not the most important part, what ailment, for example, is comparable to that ailment which we call a heart-ache, which eats and consumes all the vigor and joy ~~of~~ of life and ultimately undermines the very foundation of living?

I am not now referring to the abnormal maladies of the human spirit. I am not referring to that which is morbid or pathological, the neuroses and the psychoses of sick people, to those ailments which require clinical attention. I am referring to <sup>the suffering of</sup> normal people who are called upon to bear ~~these~~ heavy loads, ~~of life which frequently break them.~~ Physical suffering has to be of the most extreme kind to break a man.



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no 4

I have known many people who have gone under, ~~when life collapsed~~, through mental and physical anguish. Here is a parent who has been dishonored by his child; here is a man who has been betrayed by his friend; here is a mother who has lost her child; here is a man whom life has defeated; here is another who is being ground down by poverty; here is <sup>another</sup> ~~a third~~ who feels himself persecuted by implacable enemies <sup>a</sup> ~~A~~ whole army of normal human beings who suffer ~~deeply~~ to the very roots of their being.

Now, every great religion and every great system of philosophy has a message for such troubled hearts, and particularly Judaism, ancient and wise with the wisdom of years.

Judaism is a ~~very~~ realistic religion. It faces facts. It does not create fictions to soften the harsh reality of things. Judaism is not a demulcent <sup>theosophy</sup> ~~theosophy~~ which ~~blithely and~~ <sup>blithely and</sup> cheerily proclaims that all human suffering is but imagination, the product of the mortal mind of man. Judaism is not very much impressed with that theology which maintains that evil is negative, that evil does not exist with God; that evil is only relative to man. <sup>This</sup> ~~which~~ is of course true, but <sup>it</sup> ~~which~~ is ~~only~~ cold comfort to those who suffer and are passing through <sup>heavy</sup> ~~great~~ tribulations.



Judaism accepts and acknowledges the sad frustrations and limitations of human life. One of its greatest texts, the *Book of Ecclesiastes*, ~~the book from which I read this morning~~, portrays man in his hour of agony both mental and physical. Judaism knows that "man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and withereth. He fleeth as a shadow and continueth not."

Judaism knows of the passions, of the weariness, of the vanity, of the horrors and the tribulations of human life, and it therefore offers no philosophy of shallow optimism, ~~to man, no Pollyanna philosophy of life. We don't find that in our texts.~~ Life is not a ~~Real~~ Paradise. Happiness is not always within the reach of man, nor is it ever continuous. And the most contented and most righteous frequently are called upon to suffer grief, sorrow, and bitterness through life.

~~But~~ On the other hand, Judaism refuses to surrender itself to a philosophy of hopeless pessimism. Unlike Hinduism, Judaism does not believe that life ~~is, by its very nature,~~ *is, by its very nature,* hopeless. Judaism does not say that human suffering is meaningless, nor does it disparage civilization, progress, nor the dignity or worth of man, the value of his striving and struggles. For the world, to Judaism, is not the result of a fatal accident, as it is to the



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Hindu. Nor is it the result of some irrational and inscrutable necessity, as it was to the Greeks. To Judaism, the world and all that is in it <sup>is</sup> the creation of the will of a wise and intelligent God, who meant ~~life to be just what it is~~, who meant human life to be just what it is, <sup>light and shadow, joy and sorrow and pain.</sup>

~~Human~~ Human life, in the mind of the wise and beneficent Creator, was meant ~~to be~~ <sup>to be</sup> according to Judaism, a struggle against evil and ignorance; a struggle against the lower and an upreaching towards the higher. ~~And~~ The whole significance of human life lies in the struggle, <sup>and</sup> and all the satisfactions of human life derive from the struggle. Therefore Judaism sought to train men to prepare themselves for the struggle. Courage, fortitude, resoluteness, patience, ~~hated~~ <sup>weapons with</sup> these are the ~~means~~ <sup>by</sup> which the soldier of the spirit equips himself for the inevitable struggle of existence. The resolute heart, the stiff upper lip, yes, even the clenched fist, <sup>I</sup> <sup>LM</sup> but always carry on. That <sup>is</sup> the teaching of our faith.

The Stoics of ancient Greece and Rome preached the philosophy of ancient Judaism. On this point the great Seneca was found to say: ~~(Seneca said)~~ "It is great and noble to have the frailty of a man and the security of a God."

Judaism taught man, in his hours of struggle and suffering, to face reality, to see suffering as it is, for what it

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is, not to deny it, not to over<sup>2</sup>estimate it, not to yield to it.

And that<sup>is</sup> the important thing<sup>1</sup> ~~the~~ courage and hope.

<sup>no 4</sup> "Why art thou cast down, ~~of~~<sup>is</sup> my soul?" "Hope in the Lord." "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever."

<sup>no 4</sup> In the midst of suffering, ~~to~~<sup>is</sup> be able to hope that light will follow the darkness, that ~~is~~<sup>is</sup> an act of will. ~~Man~~<sup>Man</sup>

must learn how to exercise his will so that ~~in the hour of danger,~~

in the hour of peril, when he is attacked by misfortune, by

~~suffering~~, physical and spiritual he will be able to withstand the onslaught and come out the victor.

From this point of view, ~~which is~~<sup>is</sup> to my mind a ~~sane~~<sup>sane</sup> and practical point of view, Judaism was able to reveal to man that suffering is not without its moral compensation<sup>6</sup>. Those men who are not rebellious and those who are not crushed by suffering may derive a measure of strength and a full measure of wisdom from their ~~trials, and tribulations.~~

Gold is tried by ~~the~~ fire. The eyes of men, ~~my friends,~~ see more clearly after they have been washed by tears. The hearts of men beat more truly after they have been pinched by anguish and tried by sorrow. The lips of men speak more kindly after they have tasted the cup of life's bitterness. Insight comes from plumbing



depths. I know of men and women who have been drawn together by common sorrow and common bereavement, as they <sup>had</sup> ~~have~~ not been drawn together ~~spiritually~~ in life before. The wise may learn from their ~~own~~ suffering.

Recently I read in a book of verse written by Lizette Woodworth Reese, a poet of great talent and profound insight, a group of <sup>poems</sup> ~~sonnets~~ dedicated to a little girl, ~~little~~ Henrietta, a four-year-old child who had died. She was the delight of the home, and all things lived in her presence. ~~And~~ When she died, the light of life went out for all who loved her, and darkness settled upon their habitations. <sup>Miss Reese</sup> ~~She~~ writes:

extract

Was life henceforth to be but days, days, days,  
That a few hundreds make into a year?  
Like coins to measure out with bargaining hand,  
Enough for roof, cloak, so much weight of bread?  
Had we been stripped for this and nothing more?  
For nothing more at all?  
Yet what was lodging without loveliness?  
Cloak without laughter, loaf without a song?  
Could one brief grave out in the autumnal wet,  
Serve us such scarceness, strip us down to this?

We could not bear to see in the old grass,  
In the old walled yard, her new little grave.  
We could not bear it. Had we left her there,  
To kin with cold oblivion and the dark,  
Kept from her lovers and the good stout sun,  
And all the spinning year?  
Trapped underground to dole her April out  
For some end of the hard and aged dust?  
We could not bear it. One cry broke from all:  
"My God, my God, You have forgotten us!"



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And thus they walked down their road of sorrow,  
groping in the dark, seeking some comfort and solace in their  
hour of bereavement. And it comes to them. ~~and~~ the poet closes  
on this high note:

extract

"Old days are over, and old sorrows gone;  
The unchimneyed fields, the ~~the~~ low mellowed house  
Set for a century in the four great winds  
Are perished with the nine trees in the lane.  
Yet still those quiet levels hold her grave,  
Old, now, in the old grass,  
A little sad. What have we kept of all?  
That love, being lit of God, fails not or ends:  
That years are but His way to make us climb;  
And tears His way to make us understand."

"That years are but His way to make us climb and  
tears His way to make us understand."

~~and~~ What is true of suffering ~~is true~~ is true  
also of death. Some men fear death. More men fear dying. ~~is~~  
We have surrounded death with that which is dark and gruesome.  
Still more men fear, not their death or their dying, but the  
death and dying of their dear ones. That, of course, is the most  
tragic point of all fear. That belongs to the realm of suffering  
of which I have spoken, for which only courage and faith are man's  
allies.

Normal people seldom brood over death. <sup>their own</sup> The life  
impulse is too strong and drives the thought of death out of our



consciousness. Even ~~the~~ dangerously sick people think less of death than we imagine, and ~~also~~ <sup>generally</sup> the ~~very~~ old are quite reconciled to it and frequently welcome the swift consummation of their days. I have seldom stood at the bedside of the dying and beheld a dying man fear death. ~~Nature somehow supplies a merciful narcosis which precedes death.~~

How does every great religion, every great system of philosophy, how does our own religion teach men to meet death? ~~With~~, <sup>with</sup> resignation, ~~in~~ <sup>with</sup> nobility, with pride, <sup>and</sup> with hope, ~~with resignation.~~

An eminent Rabbi was once asked what should one say to mourners when calling upon them for condolence. ~~He~~ <sup>He</sup> said this: "Brothers bowed down in grief and suffering, put your ears to this consideration, this fact endures forever; it is a road which began with creation and will end with it. Many have drunk of this cup and many will drink of it, as with the first so with the last. May the Father of Consolation console you."

There is in this statement of the Rabbi a calm and almost proud resignation to that which is inevitable. Our sacred literature teaches us and our faith has taught us from our ~~very~~ youth to look upon death as we look upon life, as part of the cycle of existence. <sup>11</sup> We bring our days to an end as a tale that is told. <sup>11</sup> "Dust thou art and to dust thou shalt return."



START →

To face death with resignation and to face it with nobility, as one who apprehends some stupendous natural phenomenon, as one who sees something solemn and magnificent; to face death with pride, with the pride of one who has finished the task which was assigned to him, who has performed his duty to the best of his ability, who has persisted though the road was hard; <sup>with</sup> ~~the~~ the pride of one who knows that he leaves after him a memory and a name; to face death with hope, as one who knew hope in life and will not lose it in death, as one who knows that God is the God of the living but also the God of the dead; as one who can say unto himself, "Yea though I walk through the <sup>valley of the shadow</sup> ~~shadow of the valley~~ of death, I <sup>will</sup> ~~shall~~ fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

That is how our religion teaches us to face death, <sup>with</sup> ~~with~~ resignation, with pride, with hope. Our religion has not <sup>laid heavy</sup> ~~made great~~ emphasis on the doctrine of immortality. There is much less of the doctrine of immortality in ancient Israel than in modern Israel. The ~~ancient~~ ancient books have no definite teachings on the subject of immortality. The immortality of ancient Israel was built upon the here and not the hereafter. All the values of life had to be weighed in the balance of this mundane existence and had to be vindicated upon this earth.



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In ancient times the group life of a people was tremendously strong, and the individual was absorbed by the group. He did not think particularly of his own survival. It was enough for him to know that his group, his people, would endure. There was in ancient Israel, as among all peoples in ancient times, some belief in the nonperishability of man. Man has always refused to accept his ~~own~~ total annihilation. He could not conceive of it; ~~he~~ still is unable to conceive of it. But the existence of man after death, in the conception of our forefathers in ancient times, was a sort of sad existence in the netherworld, a world of eternal silence, a world from which there is no returning. It was not a world of bliss or happiness or judgment or ~~of~~ horror. It was just existence and nothing more.

~~But~~ The doctrine of immortality gained among our people with the centuries. It grew in the minds of our people; ~~as~~ the individual man discovered more and more his own personality and began to yearn more and more for his ~~own~~ personal survival, as the race began to realize that righteousness is not always vindicated on this earth and evil not always punished, as the Messianic hope of the people for the Kingdom of Righteousness on this earth failed of realization, ~~and~~ people



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began to think of the netherworld <sup># as a place</sup> where these wrongs would be  
 righted, where a balance would be established, where that which  
 is crooked will be made straight. ~~And so~~ the doctrine of  
 immortality, only the traces of which we find in the Bible,  
 grew among our people <sup>under</sup> ~~with the~~ Persian and ~~the~~ Greek influence.  
~~And~~ <sup>teachers</sup> With the ~~Rabbis~~ of the Middle Ages we already find a well-  
 defined doctrine of immortality which has become and now is an  
 important teaching of Judaism. Namely, that the soul of man  
 is an entity of its own, deriving its eternal being from God,  
 and therefore survives the dissolution of this physical body  
 and continues its life uninterrupted.

But this should be said of the doctrine of  
 immortality; among the best minds of our people it is a hope  
 and a mystery. They claim to know ~~very~~ little about the nature  
 of that survival. The hereafter, to the great minds of Israel,  
 is not a place of sensual, physical enjoyment, as it is in the  
 Koran, ~~the teachings of the~~ <sup>the Moslems</sup> ~~Moslems~~. It is a place of spiritual  
 enfoldment, a place where the mind and soul of man continues its  
 endless, unquenchable quest of perfection.

(quote Hebrew) "The Righteous have no peace and  
 have no rest either in this world or in the next world." →



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not  
 "They go from strength to strength," <sup>from one level of being to another, from one reach of perfection to another.</sup> That is the concept of immortality among the best minds of our people.

And so we are taught ~~my friends~~ to face death with resignation, with nobility, with pride, with hope. Death is sad only when we have missed all the meaning and all the beauty of existence. Death ~~is~~ is sad only when we go to our graves <sup>without</sup> ~~not~~ having climbed the heights which we might have climbed, <sup>without</sup> ~~not~~ having become what we might have been, <sup>without</sup> ~~not~~ having raised the banners which we might have <sup>unfurled</sup> ~~unfurled~~.

not  
 ← Death ~~is~~ is sad when we go down to our graves with regrets, regrets for joys which we might have shared, for love which we might have given, for beacons which we might have kindled. Death is sad, very sad, when the portals of the grave close over us and we leave no memory behind us, no one to ask and no one to answer who and what we were, no trace to mark our passage through time, no echo to hold, if only for a moment, the ardent song of our heart. <sup>Then</sup> ~~That~~ death is sad. Otherwise death is not sad. It is the consummation of our days, the harvest which follows the seed-time, the fall and ~~the~~ winter which follows the spring and <sup>no</sup> ~~the~~ summer. <sup>One</sup> ~~One~~ of the most beautiful phrases of <sup>those</sup> ~~our~~ sages which I am fond of repeating when I stand beside ~~dear ones~~ <sup>this:</sup> who have loved and lost is <sup>(quote Hebrew)</sup> "The righteous, the good, are alive even in death, for no one is dead until he has been forgotten."