



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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154

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55

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Rabbis and their critics, 1932.

1. Some of you, I am afraid, will be disappointed this morning. Will not engage in polemics. Will not answer any ^{personal} critic of mine. To be criticized or attacked is quite a regular and customary experience with me. In the course of a very active public ministry of more than a decade and a half, during which I have stood for, and attempted to champion, certain very positive ideas and movements, I have made enemies, and I have, of course, been attacked. All men who are in public life, and are not satisfied with being harmless idols, or shudders, ~~and~~ are men of good fellows, ~~but~~ have similar experience. Sometimes these attacks are ~~confined~~ ^{prevented} to inspire by legitimate diff. of opinion, and ~~compare themselves~~ ^{compare themselves} to the decent amenities of public discussion. Often, however, they are motivated by personal animosity, helpless rage and jealousy; and they, then, take the character of shameless innuendo and plain mud-slinging. Mostly I ignore criticisms. Never do I ^{consciously} initiate controversy. Occasionally when the attack is particularly virulent and personal I take occasion to expose the critic, and the motives behind his criticism, so that the unprejudiced may know what is really behind that criticism ~~at all~~.
2. Recently I did just that in the case of H.S. - a journalist, free-lance and Z. Carlet-Bassett, who sought to palen off at the ~~long~~ public, a ^{word} portrayal of me, as if it were the sincere work of an dispassionate, objective student, the Am. J. scene. (story). ~~He~~ I felt constrained to expose this gentleman, and to make public the personal work back of his caricature.
3. I was moved by another consideration. The attack which centered upon me, was plant of wholesale making up upon Am. J. ministry, whom symbol, I am supposed to be. The gentleman says are the necessary consequence of debates,

that "my example has served more to mould the aspirations & ideals of young Rabbin than any other single influence, this decade". And then proceeds to indict the young Rabbis on every charge imaginable. They are misceins, poseurs, self-masters, poor scholars, poor orators, and what not. I felt Having been singled out as the squealer and splutterer, the real ground was, I feel called upon, first to make known the ^{utterly} qualifications, the wholesale ^{frightful} criticisms to make such criticism; for this M.M. is an G.H. David & I learning, possessed of a belatedly acquired mentality, a recent rate writer and a their rate orator, who visits upon the Rabbis when he ~~comes to~~ to criticize the deficiencies, his own make-up; and, usually, to defend the same in unmitigated against such inept and ill-considered ~~attacks~~ ^{devastations}.

4. I was gratified ^{with} at the result. 8-2

4. I was gratified ^{with} the response which came from my colleagues after the publication, my reply. I was fairly ^{deluged} overwhelmed by the letters which poured in, expressing the warmest appreciation for the ^{service} review, which they believed, I rendered the profession in handling back this vicious onslaught of unsubstantiated and every-day conscience dilemmas. Here are three, of course, as usual here as there, a colleague who begin by honesty with believing that the attack was not meant for him, or who thought that the attack upon H. S. was how boosted his own stock, was a pathetic attempt to defend the works. But the man greatly saw they the unsubstantiated -

5. M. S. belongs to a ^{white} group which in recent years has been making the minority the target for their shots. The ones who comprise this group are the main journalists + writers whose talents have not enabled them to estab. ees. in the non-J. literary world. They turned to the J. world with their wares. and here too they have not been as successful, financially and otherwise, as they had hoped to be. They

wanted recognition, acclaim, laurels, rewards - and there was not path coming. They have become enraged & vindictive, and they are venting their wrath upon all men who in J. public life, who have achieved any eminent standing, influence or any measure of success.

① Their values for a time in the U. S. Periodicals,
this magazine, would ~~not~~ ^{be} ~~for~~ ^{blast} J. Coates, ~~not~~ ^{part}
Kobler, and J. in blatant, with ^{exaggeration} revelations and
amusing chapters. ~~But~~ J. lay under the hand of the author.
Gen. J. is very far.
Kobler are unimpaired, and passion, and pleasure. The
L. recommends are unlike. emerges. I express this
group - "Why Do... The U. S. has run on out of
business. ~~They~~ have not been fixed upon.

(2) Their slogan was J. culture. J. culture ^{was} their
motto. for pleasure. They do not know what J. culture
is - underlying is pleasure - neither Heaven, nor God -
but they know that they are hostile to the J. cult.
esp. Ref. J. cult. They resent that fact that the J. cult
is such an important sect. in Am. J. cult - and
its leaders like root practices, leadership. They
would like to be the opponents, Am. J. cult.

(3) And because I made it my business to ~~investigate~~ ^{investigate} their ~~conduct~~ ^{conduct} to ~~investigate~~ ^{investigate} their scholarly equipment for the fact when they set out to ~~scrutinize~~ ^{scrutinize} their program and ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~show~~ ^{show} these ~~charges~~ ^{charges} before the public - they have never ~~for~~ ^{for} ~~us~~ ^{us} ~~will~~ ^{will} be other attacks. ^{And} ^{perhaps} ^{also} ^{other} ^{replies.}

6. The position which I, ^{and many very early ones} have endeavored to maintain throughout my ministry - and which Miss Countess to this secular generation meets with for guidance is this:

are the spokesmen - they should let the
spokesmen - they are spokesmen, who tend
to speak as in unity and not, let's say,
journalism - & journalism. They are! Blacks
on the J. scene - with creativity, expression
and chapel in democratic recognition.
I am (my) and colleague have been
driven back by them - intimidated -
I made it my business to avoid the
entirety of these people, mostly the
intellectuals, expression & their purpose - and
in a series of articles told the story
to the Am. J. public - they have never
looked me -

5. ~~If most important - and I do now maintain~~
~~that~~ ^{it is} that the only reason why the Jew persisted in
maintaining his identity in the world
- ② I have searched high & low in Jew. liter. to discover
evidence that the Jew struggled to persist amidst adverse
circumstances in order that he could develop a great
art; - a way of music, or drama.
- ③ I find nowhere that J. opposed to intermarriage with
other people (a practice which never even least
disturbed him) on the ground that the resultant
racial admixture would persecute his people
children or women.

There was but one reason "but he will turn away the
sun from following them, that they may seek other
gods".

J. persisted in racial prejudices in order to
preserve integrity, his faith. loyalty to faith
spelt loyalty to race. When Amer. Jew will
abandon his faith he will swiftly & surely
assimilate. - & no frankness & J. broke -
& broke on J. act, let, or phil. will be potent
enough to save him. The auth. w. Jew
will be put to go - as he always has been. The
w. rediff. large as by sheer per. conviction. until
the debates arise, power will scatter &
overwhelm him too. The Decker naturalist will
endure until such time as his credibility
be removed from the stage manifest of Amer. life.
The E. Amer. is dissipated by the dissolving infl.
of Amer. life. - Even strong appeal, Pol. will
not prove suff. to command their loyalty or
help to him. The estab. of Amer.
as P. will not achieve moral progress.
for the Amer. Jew. German Fatherland -
Cultural playground in U. S. is a vain
& unbearable fantastic dream - Balkans -

EAST 105TH STREET AT ANSEL ROAD

TELEPHONES CEDAR 0132-0133

RABBI

ABBA HILLEL SILVER, D.D.
RABBI

HARRY A. LEVY
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

[illegible]

their views from the same work 1 J.
later - This is due to 2 things ① Subject Popular and
attract ~~Measures~~ ② Easy to review another's work than
to write something yourself. Jan. Ch. there also
calls to the attention and attract. - ~~the~~ the
Fortunately some prejudice are sensational, & some do
cheaper & vulgarize the prejudice. Fortunately they are not
typical. & some day, when a few circumstances lay down
will better be suff. to express their disgust, the
become, blustering, noisy occupants, the prejudice
will meet a hasty retreat.

8. Pastoral - Not a J. custom. There a very few
are - In smaller congr. R. do call. Endeavor, Eos.
frequently appreciated. & undoubtedly helpful. But
in large congr. high impossible - 1600 - would take
4 years to reach number - Perhaps the fault
is with size of congr. - But then also, tax
must face realities charities
① Call of nat. duties. Relief - Zimmer - College

9. Rabbis are not congregational - We not spoke out -
Most liberal group among ministers in U.S.
Now you charge for prejudice against at the
liberalism / the J. Rabbis. In many cases -
only one cause is whisper of liberal causes.
Some are by natural process - that due to
we mean that they are hypocrite. Chances
as a legit. vol. Upon View st. Go or

relief, dues for Adoration, for Queen, Seemay,
for justice, for conscience, for children, for
publications, for Bureau, for Education -
Kath appeals to for action workers or others
leadership - propaganda technical direct.

① Symposium - Community center - social life -

Rabbi then, must be very Kath, post,
Wash, Belmont, Chagan other - camp.

② Nothing to do but write are never a word - to, nothing to do but write.

③ Chair - this year. R. has not time as
peace & must for creating scholarship next
then who does you have to set
aside time for scholarly present - Rare aris
occurs - a R. set publicity to work - Admirer
that he is a great scholar to work - Admirer
and morons to where it - but that
publicity politics not scholarship - No west gen -
who will this year is breeding will
benefit from the made work where then
are called upon to perform - will, its top
deserve to scholarship -

④ Symposium Center

7/ Leg. Criticism way can be learned - however -
against the teaching which has in recent
years developed among our Rabbis to have
this perfect into but reviews to discuss
the latest play, which is devoted upon
essential rel. personal themes & discussing

7581 37 Hwy - 7133 of 7 JAN 6

The Temple
EAST 105TH STREET AT ANSEL ROAD
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Cleveland

RABBI LEON I. FEUER
MINISTER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ABBA HILLEL SILVER, D.D.
RABBI

HARRY A. LEVY
EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

- ① Let after 4-5 new working a week & we have 4 of our - about - about; make before 4-5 - large at him a out - 7 - for
- ② Take 4-5 down a week
- ③ Plan Program (Working) of, take with it. Take, before working in school -
- ④ Start at working Program, from a way as 8-10 a week.
- ⑤ Meet any number of large - in your group with some in service, in help.
- ⑥ Corporate with next up. Programs day teaching them, attending out - 5 - from working.
- ⑦ Before Contact members, and before members - what number of members and 1 a certain date. want to start.
- ⑧ Let in your office from visit you help, work with cases, & carry on, if we have members, & your life.
- ⑨ The if you have been as this - you have the not done that what you should want to do - (This) - but forget and the way at they are in the morning on left, in their - in re-creating. Well working this but we mean a week.

5/ Rel. sole reason - Searched - Inter-marriage.

"lest he will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods"

J. persisted - loyalty - When Am. J. abandon

no quantum - Anti-Rel - Even strong - Palestine

German Fatherland - Cultural Pluralism -

- Only the rel. Jew - Only in Pales - he who

6/ As regards leg. criticism of Rabbinate -

1. Prof. Kaplan. - Is he to be primarily -

7/ Talk this matter of Scholarship - criticism -

① Contrast is made on basis of know. of Rabbinism's
not less learned - less specialized.

② Old R. had little else to do but study - שליח -
- old communities - quota - departmentalized
- new - Breed - Energy - Raise funds -
hospitals etc - unions - downtowns -
- Synagogues - Center - Recreation.
- Rabbi, mouth, not only Rabbi - pl 3 - 3rd
1st - 2nd - + campaign

③ Nothing to do - but on seminar & work -

8/. Clearly this generation R - us time - there + there -
rare avis - occas. a R. set publicly -
The next generation -

9/. Legit. criticism - launched. tendency - book -
reviews - mixed - (1) Subjects have pop. appeal & draw
"Mourning" - (2) Easy -
Some profiles are sensational - for honesty -
+ Some day - blushing, worship -

10/. Pastoral - let a J. custom - Still -
small town - 1600 - Janet large copy
What would you rather -

11/. Let courageous - speak out - Most liberal -
Too radical -

12/. Let Informers -

13/. Perhaps, in fear to come - better up -
In mean time

recorder may hold cases. Views are
being changed on a few points.

① frequently criticism - too radical. In addition
Meddley -

10/ but safe men - not perfect men - but average
men - some pos. pos. ability & other some
greater concentration & other & some more modest
average standing & other - but many stage
who are very frequently under temptation
+ harassment, the cause of trouble.

11/ Perhaps, in years to come, can lead both org. to
institutions will establish - its activities proper
defect - the real function of sy. shall appear -
same, the criticism will vanish. It means two
times with these as they must be with
us.

532
Sermon, The Temple, April 17, 1932
(1932)

To be criticized or attacked is quite a regular and commonplace experience in my life. In the course of a very active public ministry of more than a decade and a half, in which I have stood for and tried to champion some very positive ideas and movements in Jewish life and to express some very positive and definite views on issues both local and national, I have, of course, made some enemies, and have, of course, been criticized and attacked. I suppose that all men ~~who are~~ in public life ~~and~~ who are not satisfied merely with being pampered idols or straddlers or just good fellows, have similar experiences.

Sometimes these attacks are in the realm of ideas, ^{They} and are inspired by legitimate differences of opinion and are restricted to the amenities of public discussion. But oftentimes these attacks are motivated by personal animosities and envy. They then take on the character, naturally, of slander, innuendo, and plain mud-slinging.

Mostly I ignore such criticism. Never do I consciously initiate controversy. Occasionally, ^{an} when the attack is ^{especially} particularly virulent and personal, I do take occasion to expose the critic and the real motive behind the criticism so that those who are uninformed may understand ~~just what is motivated by the~~ ^{peculiar} malice and viciousness ^{which} prompted the attack. ~~the author of a published attack on me and on the Reform rabbinate~~

Recently I felt constrained to expose ~~this gentleman~~ ^{Mr. Samuel} and to make public the personal malice of his attack. I was also moved by another consideration not quite as personal as this. His attack, which centered upon me, was part of a wholesale onslaught upon the American Jewish ministry, particularly the Reform Jewish ministry whose symbol he believes I am.

~~The gentleman~~ ^{Maurice Samuel} pays me an unconscious compliment by declaring that my "example has done more to ~~the~~ ^{mold} the aspirations and ideals of young rabbis than any other single influence of this decade."

I had to rub my eyes when I read that.

And then he proceeds to indict these young rabbis throughout the land on every conceivable charge. They are insincere. They are poseurs. They are self-seekers. They are poor scholars. They are poor everything. And because I was publicly singled out as the symbol of these men and their spokesman, I felt called upon first to reveal the utter lack of qualification of this gentlemen to make such criticism. For Mr. Samuel is a frightful Am-Haaretz, devoid of Jewish learning, possessed of a hopelessly confused mentality, as evidenced by his books "You Gentiles" and "I, the Jew", a second-rate writer and a third-rate orator who visits upon the rabbis all the deficiencies of his own make-up.

\ That was my first reason for writing a reply. And the second was to defend the men in the ministry against unjust and ill-tempered denunciations.

I was gratified at the response which came to me from my colleagues throughout the land on the publication of my reply. I was fairly deluged with letters expressing ~~the~~ ^{the} warmth and appreciation for a service which these men believe I rendered the profession and the cause of Judaism in hurling back this vicious onslaught from an envenomed and envy-consumed dilettante.

Here and there, of course, as much here as there, a rabbinical colleague of mine who beguiled himself into the belief that somehow Samuel's attack was not intended for him because he was different; or here and there, as much here as there, some colleagues who somehow believed that the attack on Rabbi Silver automatically raised the value of ~~his~~ ^{their} own stock, made a pathetic attempt to defend the writer. But men saw quickly through the maneuver.

Samuel belongs to a whole group of men who in recent years have made the rabbinate the target of their shots. These men are mostly journalists and writers who have attempted to establish themselves in the non-Jewish literary world and have failed. They have accordingly brought their literary wares over to the Jewish world and here, too, they have not been as successful financially and otherwise as they had hoped to be. They wanted recognition, acclaim, leadership, and rewards, ^{Since} and these were

not forthcoming, ~~and so~~ they have become enraged and vindictive, and they are venting their wrath upon all men in Jewish public life in the United States who have achieved some measure of standing, influence, or success.

The vehicle of this group for some years was the Medarah Journal, a periodical ^{published} which ~~appeared~~ in New York City. And this periodical would ~~periodically~~ blast forth ^{from time to time} with cynicism, with recklessness, with what we Jews call ^{chuzpah} ~~about~~ about Jewish leaders, both lay and of the parish, and Jewish institutions. "Jewish lay leadership is bankrupt", was their cry. Also, "the Jewish rabbinic leadership is bankrupt." "The rabbis are uninformed. They are flunkies. The rabbinic seminaries are intellectual morgues."

I took it upon myself, knowing these people, to expose them some years ago in a series of articles called "Why do the heathen rage?" The ^{catch phrase} ~~slogan~~ of these gentlemen was "Jewish Culture". Jewish culture was to be a substitute for Judaism. They were not entirely sure what was meant by Jewish Culture, whether it was milchig or fleischig or whatever, ~~it was~~. But they were sure that they were hostile to the religion of the Jewish people.

They resented the position of importance which the synagogue was occupying in Jewish life, ^{They also resented the position and influence of the rabbis in} and ~~also the position and influence which the rabbis were occupying in~~ Jewish life ^{and their influence}. They wanted to be the spokesmen and leaders, and because I made it my business to dissect their credentials, ~~investigate their credentials~~ to investigate their scholarly equipment for the task which they ^{had} ~~set~~ ^{for} themselves, to scrutinize this program of Jewish Culture and ^{to} lay bare this sham and charlatanism to the American public, of course these gentlemen have never forgiven me. ^{Samuel's} This last attack is only one of a number which have ^{taken place} and which will take place. And ^{those} of you who ~~will~~ take pleasure in these things may rest assured that there will be other attacks and perhaps other replies.

The position which I have taken throughout my ministry and which many of my colleagues have taken, which runs counter to this so-called Jewish Culture as a substitute for Judaism, is simply this: I believe that religion is the sole reason why

the Jew has persisted throughout the ages in maintaining his identity. I have searched high and low in Jewish history and literature to discover evidences ^{to support} ~~to prove~~ the thesis that the Jew struggled desperately ^{to survive} through the ages against great odds, ~~to survive~~ because he wanted to produce great art, literature, or drama. The Jew strenuously resisted intermarriage, for example, a practice which would have destroyed him in the long run, not on the grounds that such intermarriage would result in a racial admixture and would produce less gifted poets, musicians, or writers among the people, but simply for the reason given already in Biblical times: "Lest he will turn away thy son from following Me, that ^{he} ~~they~~ may serve other gods."

The Jew persisted in racial loyalty because of his loyalty to his faith. When the Jew in the United States or elsewhere ~~will~~ abandon^s his faith, he will quickly assimilate, and no quantum of Jewish art or music and no amount of books on Jewish history and philosophy will be able to check the inevitable process of assimilation. The anti-religious Jew will be the first to go, as he was always the first to go. The religiously indifferent Jew will linger on by sheer force of inertia until the relentless, assimilationist forces ~~will~~ scatter and overwhelm him too. The secular nationalist Jew will endure until such time as his ideology, ~~which~~ which is borrowed from the old world, from the compact and segregated community life of Europe, ~~will~~ ~~in the new~~ scene of American life will become^s dissipated and scattered in the new scene of American life.

Even the magnificent appeal which Palestine is making today to our people will not be strong enough in the years to come to command the unfaltering loyalty of the Jewish youth. The upbuilding of a strong Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, however much desirable, will not achieve the miracle of preservation for the Jews in the United States.

The existence of a German fatherland, strong and powerful, has not kept the eight or ten millions of Germans in the United States from assimilating.

Cultural pluralism, the idea that America must become a crazy quilt of numerous cultural groups, is a vain and hopeless dream. The United States would not permit itself ^{to} be Balkanized culturally. ^{We know} So that from any reading of the Jewish

scene in the United States, only that Jew who ~~will~~ remain steadfast to his faith, (keep that in mind: not merely to the set of abstract theologic principles which are rich, inherent in Judaism, but to the abundant faith which is our people's, a faith which carries with it Jewish practices, Jewish habits, Jewish modes of life, Jewish customs and the Hebrew language through which the genius of the race expresses itself, the synagogue and hosts of common loyalties ~~all~~ of which ^{all} come with Jewish religious life) will carry on the destiny of our people in this country. All others will assimilate as they always have, as they inevitably must.

Only in Palestine is a secular Jewish life possible, or in those countries where a Jew possesses a distinct group life, possesses distinctive minority rights ¹/_M a nationality within an empire of nationalities.

This is not and cannot be the case in the United States. So that we who love both Judaism and the Jewish people (and the two are not synonymous) wish to preserve Judaism through the Jewish people and the Jewish people through Judaism. Therefore we are vigorously opposed ^{to,} and fighting consistently against, attempts to reduce Judaism to a secular nationalism or humanism. And because of that it is likely to be the battleground of the next decade or two, and you may expect your rabbi and all other rabbis to be in the midst of the fight of polemics.

As regards the criticism of the rabbinate, no right-thinking man resents well-directed and instructive criticism. In fact the rabbis are their own severest critics. If you have ever attended a ^{meeting} conference of the ^{Central} Conference of American Rabbis, or if you have ever read the reports in the yearbook published by the Conference, you would realize how unsparingly the rabbis criticize their own profession and themselves. There is no spirit of smug complacency among the rabbinate in the United States today, I assure you. The difficulty is with the layman, that he is not profound enough in his criticism and does not reach down to the basic problem involved.

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1158

I believe that it was Professor ^{Mordecai} Kaplan who recently said that the profession of the modern rabbi is really a new profession bearing an old name. In the olden days the profession of a rabbi was well defined. The functions of a rabbi were clear-cut.

A rabbi in the old world was the religious head of his community. He was the repository of Jewish law. To him civil and ritual questions of law were brought, and he handed down a decision on the basis of tradition and law. He was also a scholar in his community, and his chief task was to study at home or in the synagogue. He studied the Torah, the Talmud, and rabbinic literature. Only occasionally did he perform weddings and officiate at funerals. These were the tasks of other religious functionaries in the community.

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→ The role of the modern rabbi is totally different. People no longer go to him for a Kashah or a Shelah in matters of Kosher and Trefah. His role as judicial head of the community is gone and his new role is not defined. Is he to be primarily a teacher, an advisor of his people, an active propagandist of social reform in keeping with the traditions of the prophets of our people, or primarily a Jewish scholar? No one can perform all of these functions and do justice to any one of them. Hence the difficulty and hence also the root of much of the criticism launched against the rabbis.

An attack ^{is} made upon the men in the ministry in the matter of Jewish learning and scholarship. And yet here, too, there is confusion in the minds of those who make the attack. The contrast is made, in the field of religious study, between the old-time rabbi and the modern rabbi. That is a false contrast to make. The rabbi of old needed to study only the Bible, the Talmud, and rabbinic Law; ^{Knowledge of any other} ~~everything else, all other~~ branches of learning ^{was} ~~were~~ not expected of him and ^{was} ~~were~~ frequently resented in him, if he had ^{it.} ~~them.~~ Occasionally a great rabbi arose who combined both great learning in Jewish sources and also learning in secular sources, but by and large the rabbi of old specialized in ~~one~~ sort of learning and devoted his years to that, and of course ^{he} ~~became~~ master of it.

But of the modern rabbi much else is expected, a much more varied learning. He must know not only his Biblical science and something of Talmudic literature; he must not only be thoroughly at home in Jewish history, he must be at home in other branches of learning, in other languages, in other literatures, in some of the sciences, in economics, sociology, philosophy, psychology, history. He must be alert to what is going

on in the world around him and be well informed; otherwise he cannot lead and instruct a modern congregation who are themselves not reared in rabbinic or secular learning. A rabbi in an age such as ours, which is characterized by doubt and skepticism, must be able to command a scientific knowledge, to combat skepticism and doubt. I am inclined to believe that the intelligence and mentality of the rabbi today is not ~~inferior~~ ^{that of} the rabbi of old, but ~~simply that~~ ^{the latter} was compelled to restrict himself to one specialty of learning, while the rabbi of today must branch out and command many types of knowledge and learning.

Then, too, this fact is overlooked: the rabbi of old had little else to do but study. He was expected to spend his time in the "tents of the Torah", studying over volumes of Jewish law. The communities were old communities, well established and well organized, and the religious life was very well departmentalized. They had their quota of charitable institutions, and a definite niche was carved out for the rabbi, and a definite function. But that is not ~~the case~~ and was not the case in the United States. As far as Judaism and the Jewish people are concerned, this is a new world. Jewish communities in America had to be built de novo - from the ground up, as it were. ~~They built~~ ^{had to be built} synagogues, schools, charitable and philanthropic institutions, Jewish centers and Y.M.H.A.s. Jewish societies and lodges were called into existence. A vast program of construction and organization ^{has been} ~~was~~ laid at the doors of the rabbis of this generation, a program which consumes their time and energy. This generation of rabbis is a generation of builders. I mean that in a physical sense, if in no other sense; ^{this is} a role which the rabbis of the old world did not have, and much of the time and energy of the ^{modern} ~~rabbi~~ has to go into this exhausting process of building.

And then there is this other task which ^{has been} ~~was~~ thrust upon them, especially since the war, of fund-raising ^{and} campaigning. A plague of drives ^{has} ~~descended~~ upon the rabbis. Funds for hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, seminaries, yeshivas, dormitories, laboratories, bureaus of Jewish education and what-not; for local relief, national relief, Falasha relief, and Palestine relief. And in each and every instance the rabbis ^{have been} ~~throughout~~ the country ~~are~~ called

upon to assume the role of actual leadership in these drives, ~~and~~ [≡] these tasks have consumed much of their vitality ~~and~~ and energy and time.

The synagogues in the United States, unlike the synagogues in the [≡] [≡] old world, decided to become community centers, not only to serve the community religiously but also recreationally; not merely to be a house of ~~the~~ worship and study but to be a place of entertainment for young and old, of dances, plays, parties, cabarets, and so on. So the rabbi was called upon to be a director of a large recreational program for his people, who wanted the synagogue to become their social as well as their re-^ligious center; the rabbi today in many instances is not only a rabbi, ^a pastor, but a melamed and a chazan.

I frequently hear people say, "What does Rabbi Silver have to do? He only has one sermon to prepare and preach for Sunday mornings." They envy me my profession. I wish they could spend a week with me, not simply with me but with any rabbi of a large congregation. And I assure you that they would not be so envious. Not that I am complaining: I am not complaining and I never have. I love the profession too much to complain, and if it were five times as difficult I would still love it. But I should like you laymen to have an idea of just what a modern rabbi has to do which often ~~today~~ brings down upon him a variety of criticism.

I have nothing to do during the week but attend four or five noon meetings for various kinds of organizations, civic, charitable, and educational. I have nothing to do but lecture three or four times a week in the evenings, sometimes at noon, before organizations, societies, schools, ^S universities, both at home and outside of Cleveland.

I have nothing to do but teach four or five classes a week.

921
1159 I have nothing to do but to plan programs ^{and meetings for various} organizations within ~~The~~ Temple; to arrange lecture/courses and do a certain amount of supervision and instruction in a large religious school.

I have nothing to do but officiate at funerals ^L and weddings, sometimes as many ^{many} as eight or ten a week.

I have nothing to do but meet with any number of people who come to my study

540

9

for advice and for help.

I have nothing to do but ~~to~~ cooperate with national Jewish organizations ^{which} ~~who~~ require my time for lectures or for attending out-of-town meetings of boards and committees.

I have nothing to do but to conduct two or three services a week in the Temple and to prepare one sermon a week, which ought to be of some amount of interest and literary merit and scholarship.

And in my spare time I have nothing to do but make a few occasional visits to the sick and aged and carry on at least a minimum of social life in my own home. And then if I still have nothing to do, there is still the big thing left undone that one wants to do - ^{namely}, to spend hours at one's desk in study, learning and seeking new knowledge and new inspiration, recharging oneself. And frequently only the very late hours of the night and the very early hours of the morning are left for study, which in the early days was the function of the ^{main} ~~rabbi~~.

It is clear that the present generation of rabbis has not the time for the creative scholarship which some wish him to do. Here and there a rabbi does succeed in forcing himself to set aside some time for scholarly pursuits - ^{rara avis}.

^{no} Of course, occasionally you find a rabbi who sets publicity to work, advertising that he is a great scholar and is going to write an epoch-making book and ^{persuades} some morons to believe it. But that is publicity and politics, not scholarship.

The next generation of rabbis for which this generation is building will benefit from the work of this generation. It will perhaps be able to ~~take~~ take the advice and profit from the criticism and will, it is hoped, devote much time to Jewish scholarship.

And ^{rabbi} ~~then~~ then there is the criticism that ~~pastors~~ do not visit their people. Pastoral work for a rabbi is not a Jewish custom of old. The old-time rabbi did not call upon his people. His people called upon him for advice and consolation. But it ^{is} a good custom that the Protestant and Catholic ministers have found very useful and helpful. In a small community the rabbi is able to do pastoral work and finds it help^{ful}.

ful, and the best way for the rabbi to enter the homes of his people. But in a large congregation it is practically impossible. I once figured out that in this congregation of over sixteen hundred families, it would take a rabbi who wanted to visit each family one evening, about four years to make the rounds. Perhaps the fault is with our large congregations; but there is the reality of the situation which we must face.

There is ^a criticism made of ~~the~~ rabbis ^{that they turn} ~~for turning~~ their pulpits into book-[#]and play-review platforms. I have heard that criticism made of certain of my colleagues who prefer the cheap and vulgar and sensational and easy rather than the difficult way of ^{sermon} preparing an original contribution on vital religious or moral themes. The reason that some rabbis do it is that the laymen like that sort of thing. They are popular subjects and they draw. When "Mourning Becomes Electra" was playing in Cleveland, I venture to say that at least twenty people asked me if I was going to review the play, and I was tempted to put into The Temple Bulletin that "Mourning Becomes Electra" is playing in Cleveland next week and Rabbi Silver will not lecture on it.

There is a certain sensationalism, a certain cheapness and vulgarity in some of the pulpits of this land, but fortunately these pulpits are not typical, and as soon as some conscientious individuals in these temples will bestir themselves and express their disgust, those loud and blustering rabbis will beat a hasty retreat.

The charge is also made that rabbis are not courageous in advocating social ideals and do not speak their minds. In some instances this is a just criticism. But I think the Jewish rabbis are more liberal than ^{the clergy of} any other religious ^{denominat} ~~denomin~~ nation in the United States; in fact the non-Jewish clergy frequently marvels at the liberal utterances expressed by the rabbis in this country. In some cities it is the rabbi who is the sole individual raising his voice for liberalism and social righteousness. On the other hand, you and I know how frequently the rabbi is attacked for doing just that; how frequently he is attacked for being too outspoken and for meddling in what the layman thinks is not his business. Criticism comes from both angles: the radical thinks the rabbi is not radical enough and the conservative thinks the rabbi

is too radical. And there you are.

To sum up, the Jewish people never looked upon its rabbis as saints or supermen. They looked upon them as men, some of them more gifted than others, but men of the people, chosen by the people to perform certain religious duties, ^{and} provide certain religious guidance and leadership in Jewish religious life. And I think that by and large, working under these difficulties, the American Jewish ministry is possessed of earnest, sincere, ^{by} hardworking, faithful men, who following their best judgment are serving the cause of Judaism and the Jewish people.

Perhaps in the years to come, when our life ^{is} will be better organized, when our institutions will have been longer established, when Jewish responsibilities will have been properly divided and assigned, ~~that~~ much of this criticism which is today being made of the rabbi will of itself disappear. ~~_____~~ Meanwhile may I advise all Jewish laymen to bear with their rabbis even as their rabbis have to bear with them.



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160

Page 6
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Summons 383

174

RABBIS AND THEIR CRITICS

BY ~~8~~

~~RABBI ABRAHAM HILFEL SILVER~~
~~FRIDAY~~

Sermon, 1st Temple APRIL 17th, 1932

In discussing this morning the subject "Rabbis and Their Critics" I am afraid that some of you may be somewhat disappointed. I am not going to engage in polemics, nor in answer to any criticism that has been launched against me.

To be criticized or attacked is quite a regular and commonplace experience in my life. In the course of a very active public ministry of more than a decade and a half, in which I have stood for and tried to champion some very positive ideas and movements in Jewish life and to express some very positive and definite views on issues both local and national, I have, of course, made some enemies and have, of course, been criticized and attacked. I suppose that all men who are in public life and who are not satisfied merely with being pampered idols or straddlers or just good-fellows, have similar experiences.

Sometimes these attacks are in the realm of ideas and are inspired by legitimate differences of opinion and are restricted to the amenities of public discussion. But oftentimes these attacks are motivated by personal animosities and envy.

They then take on the character naturally of slander, innuendo and plain mud-slinging.

Mostly I ignore such criticism. Never do I consciously initiate controversy. Occasionally when the attack is particularly virulent and personal I do take occasion to expose the critic and the real motive behind the criticism so that those who are uninformed may understand just what is motivated by the particular malice and viciousness. . . .

Recently I had occasion to do just that, in the case of a journalistic free lancer, a Zionist carpet-bagger, by the name of Maurice Samuels who sought to palm off on the American Jewish public a caricature of what he thought was a word portrait of me, as if it were the sincere work of a dispassionate, objective student of the American Jewish scene. And I had to do the unpleasant thing, namely, to expose the gentleman and reveal the motive behind the attack.

This gentleman was employed by the Zionist Organization of America at a time when I was its Vice President. And he was drawing a rather substantial salary at a time when the organization

- 3 -

was running a disastrous deficit and was facing bankruptcy. I suggested that for the salvation of the Organization, his salary, together with some others, should be reduced. And that, this gentleman never forgave me. He bided his time and waited for an opportunity to launch an attack which he did in his book "Jews on Approval," which some of you, because of his attack on me, were foolish enough to buy.

I felt constrained to expose this gentleman and to make public the personal malice of the attack. I was also moved by another consideration not quite as personal as this. His attack which centered upon me was part of a wholesale onslaught upon the American Jewish ministry, particularly the Reform Jewish ministry whose symbol he believes, I am.

The gentleman pays me an unconscious compliment by declaring that my "example has done more to mould the aspirations and ideals of young Rabbis than any other single influence of this decade."

I had to rub my eyes when I read that.

And then he proceeds to indict these young Rabbis throughout the land on every conceivable charge. They are insincere.

177

They are poseurs. They are self-seekers. They are poor scholars. They are poor orators. They are poor everything. And because I was publicly singled out as the symbol of these men and their spokesman, I felt called upon first to reveal the ~~utter inadequacy~~ of this gentleman ~~and his~~ ^{his} utter lack of qualification ~~to~~ make such criticism. ~~For Mr. Samuels is a frightful Am-Haaretz, devoid of Jewish learning, possessed of a hopelessly confused mentality, as evidenced by his books "You Gentiles" and "I, The Jew," a second-rate writer and a third-rate~~ ~~Am-Haaretz~~ orator who visits upon the Rabbis all the deficiencies of his own make-up.

That was my first reason for writing a reply. And secondly to defend the men in the ministry against ~~the~~ unjust and ill-tempered denunciations.

~~and~~ I was gratified at the response which came to me from my colleagues throughout the land on the publication of my reply. I was fairly deluged with letters expressing the warmth and appreciation for a service which these men believe I rendered the profession and the cause of Judaism in hurling back this vicious onslaught from an envenomed and envy-consumed dilettante.

Here and there, of course, as much here as there, a Rabbinical colleague of mine who beguiled himself into the belief

- 5 -

that somehow Samuel's attack was not intended for him because he was different; or here and there, as much here as there, some colleague who somehow believed that the attack on Rabbi Silver automatically raised the value of his own stock, made a pathetic attempt to defend the writer. But men quickly saw through the maneuver.

Samuels belongs to a whole group of men who in recent years have made the Rabbinate the target of their shots. These men are mostly journalists and writers who have attempted to establish themselves in the non-Jewish literary world and have failed. They have accordingly brought their literary wares over to the Jewish world and here too, they have not been as successful financially and otherwise as they had hoped to be. They wanted recognition, acclaim, leadership and rewards and these were not forthcoming and so they have become enraged and vindictive and they are venting their wrath upon all men in Jewish public life in the United States who have achieved some measure of standing, influence or success.

The vehicle of this group for some years was the Menorah Journal, a periodical which appeared in New York City

for the task which they set themselves, to scrutinize this program of Jewish culture and to lay bare this sham and charlatanry to the American public, of course these gentlemen have never forgiven me. This last attack is only one of a number which have and which will take place. And those of you who will take pleasure in these things may rest assured that there will be other attacks and perhaps other replies.

The position which I have taken throughout my ministry and which many of my colleagues have taken, which runs counter to this so-called Jewish Culture as a substitute for Judaism, is simply this.

I believe that religion is the sole reason why the Jew persisted throughout the ages in maintaining his identity. I have searched high and low in Jewish history and literature to discover evidences, to prove the thesis that the Jew struggled desperately through the ages against great odds, to survive because he wanted to produce great art, literature or drama. The Jew strenuously resisted intermarriage for example, a practice which of course, would have destroyed him in the long run, not on the

- 8 -

grounds that such intermarriage would result in a racial admixture and would produce less gifted poets, musicians or writers among the people, but simply for the reason given already in Biblical times. "Lest he will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods."

The Jew persisted in racial loyalty because of his loyalty to his faith. When the Jew in the United States or elsewhere will abandon his faith, he will quickly assimilate and no quantum of Jewish art or music and no amount of books on Jewish history and philosophy will be able to check the inevitable process of assimilation. The anti-religious Jew will be the first to go as he always was the first to go. The religiously indifferent Jew will linger on by sheer force of inertia until the relentless, assimilationist forces will scatter and overwhelm him too. The Secular Nationalist Jew will endure until such time as his ideology which is borrowed from the old world from the compact and segregated community life of Europe, until that ideology in the new scene of American life will become dissipated and scattered.

Even the magnificent appeal which Palestine is making today to our people will not be strong enough in the years to come to command the unfaltering loyalty of the Jewish

youth. The upbuilding of a strong Jewish commonwealth in Palestine, however much desirable, will not achieve the miracle of preservation for the Jews in the United States.

The existence of a German Fatherland, strong and powerful, has not kept the eight or ten millions of Germans in the United States from assimilating.

Cultural pluralism, the idea that America must become a crazy-quilt of numerous cultural groups is a vain and hopeless dream. The United States would not permit itself to be Balkanized culturally. So that from my reading of the Jewish scene in the United States, only that Jew who will remain steadfast to his faith, keep that in mind - not merely to the set of abstract theologic principles which are inherent in Judaism, but to the rich abundant faith which is our people's, - a faith which carries with it Jewish practices, Jewish habits, Jewish modes of life, Jewish customs and the Hebrew language through which the genius of the race expresses itself, the Synagogue and hosts of common loyalties all of which come with Jewish religious life,- I say, it is only the man who will remain steadfast to that, who will carry on the destiny of our people in this country. All others will assimilate as they always have, as they inevitably must.

Only in Palestine is a secular Jewish life possible or in those countries where the Jew possesses a distinct group life, possessing distinctive minority rights - a nationality within an empire of nationalities.

This is not and can not be the case in the United States. So that we who love both Judaism and the Jewish people, and the two are not synonymous, wish to preserve Judaism through the Jewish people and the Jewish people through Judaism. Therefore we are vigorously opposed and fighting consistently against attempts to reduce Judaism to a secular nationalism or humanism. And because of that it is likely to be the battle-ground of the next decade or two and you may expect your Rabbi and all other Rabbis to be in the midst of the fight on polemics.

As regards the criticism of the Rabbinate, no right-thinking man resents well-directed and instructive criticism. In fact the Rabbis are their own severest critics.

If you have ever attended a conference of The Central Conference of American Rabbis or if you have ever read the reports in the Year Book published by the Association you would realize how unsparingly the Rabbis criticise their own profession and themselves. There is no spirit of smug complacency among the Rabbinate in

the United States today I assure you. The difficulty is with the layman, that he is not profound enough in his criticism and does not reach down to the basic problem involved.

I believe it was Prof. Kaplan who recently declared that the profession of the modern Rabbi is really a new profession bearing an old name. In the olden days the profession of a Rabbi was well defined. The functions of a Rabbi were clear cut. A Rabbi in the old world was the religious head of his community. He was the repository of Jewish Law. To him civil and ritual questions of law were brought and he handed down a decision on the basis of tradition and law. He was also a scholar in his community and his chief task was to study at home or in the Synagogue. He studied the Torah, the Talmud and Rabbinic literature. Only occasionally did he perform weddings and officiate at funerals. These were tasks of other religious functionaries in the community.

The role of the modern Rabbi is totally different. People no longer go to him for a ((Hebrew - Kashah)) or a "Sheilah) in matters of (Kosher) and (Treifa). His role as judicial head of the community is gone and his new role is not defined.

Is he to be primarily a teacher or primarily a pastor, an advisor of his people, an active propagandist of social reform in keeping with the traditions of the prophets of our people, or primarily a Jewish scholar? No man can perform all of these

functions and do justice to any one of them. Hence the difficulty and hence also the root of much of the criticism launched against the Rabbis.

An attack is made upon the men in the ministry in the matter of Jewish learning and scholarship. And yet yere too, there is confusion in the minds of those who make the attack. The contrast is made on the basis of religious study between the old time Rabbi and the modern Rabbi.

That's a false contrast to make. The Rabbi of old needed to study only the Bible, the Talmud and Rabbinic Law, everything else, all other branches of learning were not expected of him and were frequently resented in him, if he had them. Occasionally a great Rabbi arose who combined both great learning in Jewish sources and also learning in secular sources. But by and large the Rabbi of old specialized in one sort of learning and devoted his years to that and of course became master in it.

But of the modern Rabbi much else is expected, a much more varied learning. He must know not only his Biblical science and something of Talmudic literature; he must not only be thoroughly at home in Jewish history, he must be at home in other branches of learning, in other languages, in other literatures, in some of the

sciences, in economics, sociology, philosophy, psychology, history. He must be alert to what is going on in the world around him and well-informed. Otherwise he can not lead and instruct a modern congregation who are themselves not reared in Rabbinic ~~but~~ or in secular learning. A Rabbi in an age such as ours which is characterized by doubt and skepticism must be able to command a scientific knowledge, to combat skepticism and doubt. So that I am inclined to believe that the intelligence and mentality of the Rabbi today is no less inferior than the intelligence of the Rabbi of old, but simply that he was compelled to restrict himself to one specialty of learning, while the Rabbi of today must branch out and command many types of knowledge and learning.

Then too, this fact is overlooked. The Rabbi of old had little else to do but to study. He was expected to spend his time in "the tents of the Torah," studying over volumes of Jewish law. The communities were old communities, well established and well organized and the religious life was very well departmentalized. They had their quota of charitable institutions and a definite niche was carved out for the Rabbi and a definite function.

But that is not and was not the case in the United States. As far as Judaism and the Jewish people are concerned this is a new world. Jewish communities in America had to be built de novo - from the ground up, as it were. They built Synagogues, schools, charitable

- 14 -

and philanthropic institutions, Jewish centers and Y. M. H. A's, Jewish societies and lodges were called into existence. A vast program of construction and organization was laid at the doors of the Rabbis of this generation. A program which consumes their time and energy. This generation of Rabbis is a generation of builders. I mean that in a physical sense, if in no other sense. A role which the Rabbis of the old world do not have and much of the time and energy of the Rabbi has to go into this exhausting process of building.

And then there is this other task which was thrust upon them, especially since the war, of fund raising, campaigning. A plague of drives descended upon the Jewish communities and upon the Rabbis. Funds for hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, seminaries, Yeshivas, dormitories, laboratories, Bureaus of Jewish Education and what not. For local relief, national relief, Falasha relief and Palestine relief. And in each and every instance the Rabbis throughout the country are called upon to assume the role of actual leadership in these drives. And these tasks have consumed much of their vitality and energy and time.

And then too, the Synagogues in the United States unlike the Synagogues in the old world, decided to become community centers, not only to serve the community religiously but also recreationally, not merely to be a house of worship and study but to be a place of entertainment for young and old, of dances, plays, parties, cabarets and what not. And so the Rabbi was called upon to be a director of a large recreational program for his people who wanted the Synagogue to become their social, as well as their religious center. So that the Rabbi today in many instances is not only a Rabbi, a pastor, but a melamed, a chazan, a (Hebrew

I frequently hear people say, "what does Rabbi Silver have to do? He only has one sermon to prepare and preach for Sunday mornings." They envy me my profession. I wish they would spend a week with me, not simply with me, but with any Rabbi of a large congregation. And I assure you that they would not be so envious. Not that I am complaining. I am not complaining. I never have. I love the profession too much to complain. And if it were five times as difficult I still would love it. But I should like you laymen to

- 16 -

have an idea of just what a modern Rabbi has to do which frequently today brings down upon him a variety of criticism.

I have nothing to do during the week but attend four or five noon meetings for various kinds of organizations, civic, charitable and educational. I have nothing to do but lecture three or four times a week in the evenings, some times at noon, before organizations, societies, schools, universities both at home and outside of Cleveland.

I have nothing to do but to teach four or five classes a week.

I have nothing to do but to plan programs, and meetings for the various organizations and clubs within the Temple; to arrange lecture courses and to do a certain amount of supervision and instruction in a large religious school.

I have nothing to do but to officiate at funerals and weddings, sometimes as many as eight or ten a week.

I have nothing to do but meet any number of people who come to my study for advice and for help.

I have nothing to do but to cooperate with national Jewish organizations who require my time for lectures or for attending

- 17 -

out-of-town meetings of boards and committees.

I have nothing to do but to conduct two or three services a week in the Temple and to prepare one sermon a week which ought to be of some amount of interest and literary merit and scholarship.

And in my spare time I have nothing to do but make a few occasional visits to the sick and aged and carry on at least a minimum of social life in my own home. And then if I still have nothing to do, there is still the big thing left undone that one wants to do, there is still the big thing, - namely, to spend hours at one's desk in study, learning and seeking new knowledge and new inspiration, recharging one's self. And frequently only the very late hours of the night and the very early hours of the morning are left for study, which in the early days ^{was} ~~was~~ the function of the Rabbi.

So that it is clear that the present generation of Rabbis has not the time for the creative scholarship which some wish him to do. Here and there a Rabbi does succeed in forcing himself to set aside some time for scholarly pursuits - Rara avis.

Of course, occasionally you find a Rabbi who sets publicity to work, advocating that he is a great scholar and is going to write an epoch-making book and persuades some morons to believe it.

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The next generation of Rabbis for which this generation is building will benefit from the work of this generation. It will perhaps be able to take the advice and profit from the criticism and will, it is hoped, devote much time to Jewish scholarship.

And then there is the criticism that pastors do not visit their people. Pastoral work for a Rabbi is not a Jewish custom of old. The old-time Rabbi did not call upon his people. His people called upon him for advice and consolation, etc. But it is a good custom that the Protestant and Catholic ministers have found very useful and helpful.

In a small community the Rabbi is able to do pastoral work and finds it helpful and the best way for the Rabbi to enter the homes of his people. But in a large congregation it is practically impossible. I once figured out that in this congregation of over sixteen hundred families, it would take a Rabbi who wanted to visit each family one evening, - it would take him about four years to make the rounds. Perhaps the fault is with our large congregations. But there is the reality of the situation which we must face.

Then there is the criticism made of Rabbis for turning their pulpits into book and play-review platforms. I have heard that

- 19 -

criticism made of certain of my colleagues who prefer the cheap and vulgar and sensational and easy rather than the difficult way of preparing an original contribution on a vital religious or moral theme.

The reason that some Rabbis do that is first of all, that the laymen like that sort of thing. They are popular subjects and they draw. When "Mourning Becomes Electra" was playing in Cleveland I venture to say that at least twenty people asked me if I was going to review the play and I was tempted to put into the Temple Bulletin that ^{is} "Mourning Becomes Electra" ~~was~~ playing in Cleveland next week and Rabbi Silver will not lecture on it.

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On the other hand, you and I know how frequently the Rabbi is attacked for doing just that. How frequently he is attacked for being

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Perhaps in the years to come when our life will be better organized, when our institutions will have been longer established, when Jewish responsibilities will have been properly divided and assigned, that much of this criticism which is today being made against the Rabbi will of itself disappear. For the time being may I advise all Jewish laymen to bear with their Rabbis even as their Rabbis have to bear with them.

And this periodical would periodically blast forth with cynicism, with recklessness, with what we Jews call Chutzpa, about Jewish leaders both lay and of the parish, and Jewish institutions. "Jewish lay leadership is bankrupt" was their cry. Also "the Jewish Rabbinic leadership is bankrupt." "The Rabbis are uninformed. They are flunkys. The Rabbinic seminaries are intellectual morgues."

I took it upon myself, knowing these people, to expose them some years ago in a series of articles called "Why Do The Heathen Rage?" The slogan of these gentlemen was "Jewish Culture." Jewish culture was to be a substitute for Judaism. They were not entirely sure what was meant by Jewish Culture, whether it was milchig or fleischig or what ever it was. But they were sure that they were hostile to the religion of the Jewish people.

They resented the position of importance which the synagogue was occupying in Jewish life and also the position and influence which the Rabbis were occupying in Jewish life. They wanted to be the spokesmen and leaders and because I made it my business to dissect their credentials, to investigate their ~~business~~ credentials, to investigate their scholarly equipment

Rabbis and their critics

At The Temple, Apr. 17, 1932

-7-

for the task which they set themselves, to scrutinize this program of Jewish culture and to lay bare this sham and charlatany to the American public, of course these gentlemen have never forgiven me. This last attack is only one of a number which have and which will take place. And those of you who will take pleasure in these things may rest assured that there will be other attacks and perhaps other replies.

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grounds that such intermarriage would result in a racial admixture and would produce less gifted poets, musicians or writers among the people, but simply for the reason given already in Biblical times: "Lest he will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other gods."

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The role of the modern Rabbi is totally different. People no longer go to him for a (~~Hebrew~~ - Kashah) or a "Sheilah" ~~regarding questions relating to "Kashah" dietary laws & cooking utensils.~~ ^{in matters of (Kosher) and (Trefal).} His role as judicial head of the community is gone and his new role is not defined.

Is he to be primarily a teacher, or primarily a pastor, an advisor of his people, an active propagandist of social reform in keeping with the traditions of the prophets of our people, or primarily a Jewish scholar? No man can perform all of these

functions and do justice to any one of them. Hence the difficulty and hence also the root of much of the criticism launched against the Rabbis.

An attack is made upon the men in the ministry in the matter of Jewish learning and scholarship. And yet yere too, there is confusion in the minds of those who make the attack. ~~The contrast is made on the basis of religious study between the old time Rabbi and the modern Rabbi.~~

~~That's a false contrast to make.~~ The Rabbi of old needed to study only the Bible, the Talmud and Rabbinic Law, ~~everything else.~~ All other branches of learning were not expected of him and were frequently resented in him, if he had them. Occasionally a great Rabbi arose who combined ~~both~~ great learning in Jewish sources ^{with} ~~and also~~ learning in secular sources. But by and large the Rabbi of old specialized in one sort of learning and ~~devoted his years to that~~ and of course became master in it.

~~And also is expected.~~
~~But of the modern Rabbi, much else is expected; a much more varied learning.~~ He must know not only his Biblical science and something of Talmudic literature; he must not only be thoroughly at home in Jewish history, he must be at home in other branches of learning, in other languages, in other literatures, ~~In some of the~~

sciences, in economics, sociology, philosophy, psychology, history. He must be alert, to what is going on in the world around him and well-informed. Otherwise he can not lead and instruct a modern congregation who are themselves not reared in Rabbinic ~~but~~ or in secular learning. A Rabbi in an age such as ours, which is characterized by doubt and skepticism, must be able to command a ~~new~~ scientific knowledge, to combat skepticism and doubt. ~~That I~~ I am inclined to believe that the intelligence and mentality of the Rabbi today is no less inferior than the intelligence of the Rabbi of old, but ^{he has} ~~he~~ was compelled to restrict himself to one specialty of learning, while the Rabbi of today must branch out and command many types of knowledge and learning.

Then too, this fact is overlooked: the Rabbi of old had little else to do but to study. He was expected to spend his time in "the tents of the Torah," ~~studying over volumes of Jewish law.~~ The communities were old communities, well established and well organized and the religious life was very well departmentalized. They had their quota of charitable institutions and a definite niche was carved out for the Rabbi, ~~and a definite function.~~

But that is not and was not the case in the United States. As far as Judaism and the Jewish people are concerned this is a new world. Jewish communities in America had to be built ~~de novo~~ from the ground up, ~~as it were.~~ They built synagogues, schools, charitable

and philanthropic institutions, Jewish centers and Y. M. H. A's, Jewish societies and lodges were called into existence. A vast program of construction and organization was laid at the doors of the Rabbis of this generation, ^a a program which consumes their time and energy. This generation of Rabbis is a generation of builders. ^a I mean that in a physical sense, if in no other sense. A role which the Rabbis of the old world do not have, and much of the time and energy of the Rabbi has to go into this exhausting process of building.

^{n.} And then there is this other task which was thrust upon them, especially since the war, of fund raising, campaigning. A plague of drives descended upon the Jewish communities and upon the Rabbis. Funds for hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, seminaries, Yeshivas, dormitories, laboratories, Bureaus of Jewish Education and what not. For local relief, national relief, Falasha relief and Palestine relief. And in each and every instance the Rabbis throughout the country are called upon to assume the role of actual leadership in these drives. And these tasks have consumed much of their vitality and energy and time.

And then too, the Synagogues in the United States, unlike the Synagogues in the old world, decided to become community centers, not only to serve the community religiously but also recreationally; not merely to be a house of worship and study but to be a place of entertainment for young and old, of dances, plays, parties, cabarets and what not. And so the Rabbi was called upon to be a director of a large recreational program for his people who wanted the Synagogue to become their social, as well as their religious center. So that the Rabbi today in many instances is not only a Rabbi, a pastor, but a melamed, a chazan, a (Hebrew

I frequently hear people say, "what does Rabbi Silver have to do? He only has one sermon to prepare and preach for Sunday mornings." They envy me my profession. I wish they would spend a week with me, not simply with me, but with any Rabbi of a large congregation. And I assure you that they would not be so envious. Not that I am complaining. I am not complaining. I never have. I love the profession too much to complain. And if it were five times as difficult I still would love it. But I should like you laymen to

have an idea of just what a modern Rabbi has to do which frequently today brings down upon him a variety of criticism.

I have nothing to do during the week but attend four or five noon meetings for various kinds of organizations, civic, charitable and educational. I have nothing to do but lecture three or four times a week in the evenings, some times at noon, before organizations, societies, schools, universities both at home and outside of Cleveland.

I have nothing to do but to teach four or five classes a week.

I have nothing to do but to plan programs, and meetings for the various organizations and clubs within the Temple; to arrange lecture courses and to do a certain amount of supervision and instruction in a large religious school.

I have nothing to do but to officiate at funerals and weddings, sometimes as many as eight or ten a week.

I have nothing to do but meet any number of people who come to my study for advice and for help.

I have nothing to do but to cooperate with national Jewish organizations who require my time for lectures or for attending

out-of-town meetings of boards and committees.

I have nothing to do but to conduct two or three services a week in the Temple and to prepare one sermon a week which ought to be of some amount of interest and literary merit and scholarship.

And in my spare time I have nothing to do but make a few occasional visits to the sick and aged and carry on at least a minimum of social life in my own home. And then if I still have nothing to do, there is still the big thing left undone that one wants to do, there is still the big thing, - namely, to spend hours at one's desk in study, learning and seeking new knowledge and new inspiration, recharging one's self. And frequently only the very late hours of the night and the very early hours of the morning are left for study, which in the early days ^{was} ~~was~~ the ^{major} function of the Rabbi.

So that it is clear that the present generation of Rabbis has not the time for the creative scholarship ⁱⁿ which some wish him to ^{indulge} ~~do~~. ^{Occasionally} Here and there a Rabbi does succeed in forcing himself to set aside some time for scholarly pursuits - Rara avis.

Of course, ^{some times, of course,} occasionally you find a Rabbi who sets ^{advertising} publicity to work, advocating that he is a great scholar and is going to write an epoch-making book and ^{he} persuades some morons to believe it.

But that of course, is publicity and politics, not scholarship.

The next generation of Rabbis for which this generation is building will benefit from the work of this generation. It will perhaps be able to take the advice and profit from the criticism and will, it is hoped, devote ^{more} much time to Jewish scholarship.

And then there is the criticism that pastors do not visit their people. Pastoral work for a Rabbi is not a Jewish custom of old. The old-time Rabbi did not call upon his people. His people called upon him for advice and consolation, etc. But ^{pastoral visits are} it is a good custom that the Protestant and Catholic ministers have found very useful and helpful.

In a small community the Rabbi is able to do pastoral work and finds it helpful and the best way for the Rabbi to enter the homes of his people. But in a large congregation it is practically impossible. I once figured out that in this congregation of over sixteen hundred families, it would take a Rabbi who wanted to visit each family one evening, ^{about} ~~it would take him~~ about four years to make the rounds. Perhaps the fault is with our large congregations, but there is the reality of the situation which we must face.

^{one hears} Then there is the criticism made of Rabbis for turning their pulpits into book and play-review platforms. I have heard that

criticism made of certain of my colleagues who prefer the cheap and vulgar and sensational and easy rather than the difficult way of preparing an original contribution on a vital religious or moral theme.

~~The~~ The reason that some Rabbis do that is, ~~first of all,~~ that the laymen like that sort of thing. They are popular subjects and they draw. When "Mourning Becomes Electra" was playing in Cleveland I venture to say that at least twenty people asked me if I was going to review the play and I was tempted to put into the Temple Bulletin that ^{is} "Mourning Becomes Electra" ~~was~~ playing in Cleveland next week and Rabbi Silver will not lecture on it.

There is a certain sensationalism, a certain cheapness and vulgarity in some of the pulpits of this land, but fortunately these pulpits are not typical and as soon as some conscientious individuals in these Temples will bestir themselves and express their disgust, those loud and blustering Rabbis will beat a hasty retreat.

The charge is also made that Rabbis are not courageous in advocating social ideals and do not speak their minds. In some instances this is a just criticism. But I think the Jewish Rabbis are more liberal than any ^{other} religious denomination in the United States. In fact the non-Jewish clergy frequently marvels at the liberal utterances expressed by the Rabbis in this country. In some cities it is the Rabbi who is the sole individual raising his voice for liberalism and social righteousness.

On the other hand, you and I know how frequently the Rabbi is attacked for doing just that. How frequently he is attacked for being

too out-spoken and for meddling in what the layman thinks is not his business. So criticism comes from both angles. The radical thinks the Rabbi is not radical enough and the conservative thinks the Rabbi is too radical. And there you are.

To sum up, the Jewish people never looked upon its Rabbis as saints or supermen. They looked upon them as men, some of them more gifted than others, some of them more courageous than others, some of them more learned than others, but men of the people, chosen by the people to perform certain religious duties, ^{to offer} certain religious guidance and leadership in Jewish religious life. And I think that ^{on the whole} by and large, working under these difficulties, the American Jewish ministry is possessed of earnest, sincere, hard-working, faithful men who following their best judgment are serving the cause of Judaism and the Jewish people.

Perhaps in the years to come when our life will be better organized, when our institutions will have been longer established, when Jewish responsibilities will have been properly ~~divided~~ and assigned, that much of this criticism which is today being made against the Rabbi will of itself disappear. For the time being may I advise all Jewish laymen to bear with their Rabbis even as their Rabbis have to bear with them.