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The Jewish people - What can it look forward to today?, 1933.

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THE JEWISH PEOPLE--WHAT CAN IT LOOK FORWARD TO TODAY?
What Does This Changing World Mean to the Jew?

WRMS By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

at
The Temple
on

Sunday Morning, November 26, 1933.



The situation, my friends, which confronts the Jewry of the world today is serious, of course, but not at all as some imagine, desperate. And our approach to this situation should be preferably one of seriousness but not one of hysteria. Were we to take stock of what has transpired in Jewish life since the World War, we would find that while there is much to place on the debit side of the national ledger, there is also much to be placed on the credit side. It is not all a case of losses. Only the historian of the future will be able to determine whether the pluses cancelled the minuses.

The German situation is of course dominating the Jewish scene today and rightly so. It is that part of our national organism which has been embattered and is now painful. It caused the whole organism to be painful. What happened in Germany has inspired certain apprehension of what might happen elsewhere in the world. Nevertheless we ought not to overlook the fact that German Jewry represents less than four percent of the Jewry in the world and that the other ninety-six percent are not at all living in the same war-beaten, disillusioned, propaganda-maddened world as are the German Jews or that the rest of the world is not living among nations of the same political or cultural traditions. But a large Jewish

communities all over the world are at peace, or at least as far as any community is at peace in this harrassed and turbulent world today. These Jewish communities are not with their problems and their irritations. They are not altogether free from discriminations. But when we remember, and we should always remember, that the millennium is not here yet, that a perfect society is still far off in the distant future. When we remember, as we should always remember, that after all our political emancipation in the world, our Jewish emancipation, is only a matter of decades and not of centuries— if you remember that, you are likely to maintain a more optimistic and patient outlook of our Jewish scene of today.

We ought not to delude ourselves, of course, into believing that we are living in any fool's paradise, that human progress has reached such a high point that racial and religious differences count for little, and that we are all brothers and belong to one great human family. Many of our people made that mistake when they proceeded to give up their racial and religious distinctiveness in the fond hope that others would do the same. The leaders of Jewish assimilation here and abroad offered to present themselves as candidates for the society of liberty, equality and fraternity, only to discover that that society existed largely

on paper and in their own too impatient imaginations. One generation or two of good will and tolerance and freedom is not sufficient to wipe out ten thousand years of fanaticism, bigotry and hatred. But neither are we living in any wilderness of hate, with our enemies all about us ready to pounce and destroy us. It is just as easy to over-estimate as to underestimate the factions working against human beings.

Ever since our dispersion, our first dispersion -- back in the sixth century, there has been anti-semitism in the world. War conditions aggravate it. Peace conditions attenuate it. Whenever political or economic strife and tension occur, the Jewish minority group is under fire. Whenever that tension is eased and conditions become normalized and tranquilized, the Jewish situation is improved. People in the world today find themselves living in one of those moods or conditions of strife, tension and strain. Therefore the Jewish position everywhere is again under fire. But its condition is far from being desperate. What we require today is cool heads, stout hearts and a measure of confidence and fortitude and faith which our fore-fathers possessed in times much more trying than ours.

In England, France, Holland, Belgium, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Near East, Egypt, United States, Canada, South Africa -- in those countries where over

seventy percent of our people are living there has been no retrogression whatsoever in the legal or civil rights of the Jewish people. The area of strain is Central and Eastern Europe. In those countries, Poland, Roumania, Austria, and of course Germany, there are definite and strong anti-semitic movements. Anti-semitic disturbances, especially in the universities, are not infrequent. But even in those countries, with the exception of Germany -- even in countries like Poland and Roumania, the lot of the Jewish people is far from being hopeless and defenseless. They are maintaining their posts in the face of great difficulties.

It should be remembered in this connection that Germany is the hot-bed and always has been the hot-bed for anti-semitism. Back in 1907, a quarter of a century ago, there was an anti-semitic political party which mustered a quarter of a million votes and sent fifteen representatives to the Reichstag. This was long before the World War. Back in 1870, just one year after the German Jew received his complete legal equality, a tremendous wave of anti-semitism swept over Germany and the Jews were blamed for the economic crisis which occurred in Germany that year. The meanest, cruelest and most degrading kind of persecution of the Jewish people took place in what is now the German Empire. There is seemingly an element of the old barbarism left in the character of the Germans which added to their arrogance and high-handedness

is largely the result of failure and of inferiority. And all that added to the doctrinaire dogmatic mood of the people has made Germany the most implacable and meanest anti-semitic of the world. The whole world, of course, is not Germanic and these Teutonic aberrations are not likely to sweep over the civilized world.

In Russia, where three million Jews live, there is no problem of anti-semitism. The Jew in Russia possesses exactly the same measure of equality as every other member of this people. There is of course the serious problem of Jewish survival. But that problem is distinctly not a Jewish problem because all the other religions face the same problem today. Only the future will tell whether religion can be definitely destroyed everywhere in the world. As a national and racial group the Jewish people of Russia seem to be in no immediate danger of their becoming extinct. The policy of the government is to encourage races and nationalities to survive and to develop themselves and to express themselves fully.

In the United States where four million Jews live, the largest single Jewish community today, anti-semitism has increased in some sections of the population following the war. The Klan and Mr. Ford tried to give a national character to these outbursts of hatred but failed. And now Nazi propagandists are again endeavoring to give a Nazi character to anti-semitism in the United States. They have not succeeded as yet. There has always

been and there is today a measure of discrimination against the Jews in some industries and in our professions and some of our colleges and universities. And social discrimination has always been here. But surely it would be rank over-statement to say that the position of the Jew in the United States has become intolerable. Up until 1929, Jewish communities thrived and prospered. Since that time our group like other groups in the United States has suffered a serious set-back. There is no attack being made upon our political position. We are not being singled out for any special attack. Unless dark days come upon this country, unless prolonged economic suffering leads to a catastrophic political upheaval there is no danger that the American traditions of freedom, tolerance, fortitude and fair play will go under.

I think that one of Hitler's most serious disappointments since he came into power is the utter and complete failure of his anti-Jewish program to attain favorable response in this country.

The pulpit, the press and the public forum in America have been extremely cooperative and sympathetic in championing the cause of German Jewry under the iniquitous Hitler regime. Only German-Americans in their eagerness to stand by Germany at all costs have been deluded or persuaded into swallowing Hitler's program, hook, line, sinker and all. These German-Americans are making a serious mistake. One cannot champion an intolerable dictatorship, fanaticism and cruelty in one part of the world and

and expect to enjoy tolerance, equality, brotherhood and good will in another part of the world. We cannot measure life by these two standards and get away with it. The German-American is likely to find himself in a terrible quandry if he is not careful.

In Palestine a new Jewish community is developing very soundly and very rapidly. It is developing not without conflict, but it is developing in spite of conflict. If the present trend of development will grow and is not interfered with, it is very likely that in the next ten years it will be one of the largest and most important Jewish communities in the world. Jews will be free from many of the scars and open wounds which Jewish communities throughout the world have. It will be a distinctly Jewish group.

The Jewish scene is not at all black. There are certain definite gains which might be registered. For example, within the last year we may see that the Era of Assimilation which had lasted in the Jewish world for nearly three-fourths of a century has definitely ended. The whole philosophy of assimilation has been declared bankrupt. The trend in many countries of Western Europe rises from a maximum Jewish life to a minimum and from there to complete self-annihilation and absorptions in majority populations.

There was a headlong rush away from the Jewish fold in the last fifty years in these Germanic countries. It was hoped that by means of assimilation they would overcome life, which they

as Jews found themselves, that they would advance their careers and attain wider economic opportunities, thus making the lot of their children easier.

One method of assimilating was baptism. Baptism was particularly popular among the Jews of Western/^{World}-- the rich Jews who are always the first to cut and run. University-trained men and the professional men believed that new doors of opportunity would open to them.

The number which were lost through baptism were not very large in proportion and relation to the number lost through inter-marriage. Inter-marriage definitely tends to decrease the Jewish population for not only is the birth rate among mixed marriages far lower than among purely Jewish marriages but also because no more than twenty-five percent of the children of mixed marriages are raised as Jews. The increase may be judged from the following figures:

In Germany the number of inter-marriages in relation to purely Jewish marriages was seven and nine-tenths percent. In 1910 it was eleven and nine-tenths percent; in 1925, nineteen and seven-tenths percent; in 1927, twenty-one and three-tenths percent.

In Germany in 1927, for every one hundred purely Jewish marriages there were fifty-four mixed marriages; in Hungary, twenty-eight; Berlin, sixty-four; Breslau, thirty-eight; Budapest, thirty-nine; Amsterdam, thirty; and in Trieste, two hundred and fifty-five. In other words in a city like Trieste, there were two and a half times as many mixed marriages as pure marriages.

Now there has been, of course, a definite check in this tendency and with it the whole tendency toward assimilation.

A quarter of a century ago, Dr. Ruppin wrote a very valuable and interesting book called "The Jew of Today" expressing the thought that anti-semitism would never prove an effective check on assimilation and he makes these interesting observations:

"It is unthinkable that either in Europe or America anti-semitism could ever bring about legal disabilities for Jews. Any such legislation would be a direct break with the political tradition of the nineteenth century, and no State could well take such a step."

"Jews as a race, are beyond the reach of legislation, and still less can they be assailed as followers of certain branches of trade, etc., since there is today no one such branch exclusively in Jewish hands."

"The danger of anti-Jewish legislation which might counteract the assimilative movement is therefore, still far distant." Yet that is exactly what has taken place.

In Germany, inter-marriage is prohibited by law. It is only a part, of course, of their program. There has come about a realization on the part of the Jews of Central Europe that inter-marriage does not insure the well being of their children, but that the Jewish racial sin is visited unto the third and fourth generation. They have realized that baptism and conversion do not open many doors of opportunity for them because they still remain Jews.

The present attack on Jewry has been on the Jew as a race. What the Jews of Central Europe have learned the Jews throughout the rest of the world are learning. They are not likely to make the same mistake in assimilating. They are not likely to exile themselves voluntarily from their own Jewish spiritual and racial home in the hope of being welcomed into an alien home which does not want them. They have learned the tragic lesson which German Jewry learned, that it does not bestow favor on the children but makes them spiritually homeless. The German youth today finds itself in a hopeless situation. The parents drove them from the Jewish world and Hitler now expells them from the German world.

The Jewish communities, of the world are going I believe from now on, to raise their children to serve the world as Jews for then, whatever fortune will hold for them in the way of adversity and conflict they will be able to meet. For they will have been prepared spiritually and intellectually for such a conflict. The Era of Assimilation has come to a definite close.

If you ask me therefore, what can the Jewish people look forward to today, throughout the world, my answer would be: first, we are looking forward to a future which is not unclouded but which is not dark or hopeless. That is true of almost every group in the world, particularly of minority groups; a future not unclouded, a future perhaps of conflict, perhaps of vast reorganization, but a

future which is not hopeless by any means unless the whole civilization of the Western world goes down to complete defeat. We shall again be the objects of attack from time to time as have so frequently been before. The spotlight of the world today is focussed upon us, but as soon as the world becomes normal, our position will become normal.

We can look forward to a future where there will be a more positive, a more energetic and a more gratifying Jewish life; first, because the philosophy of assimilation has broken down and secondly, it has been proved by history that the more pressure put on Jewish groups, the more solid they become. The more persecuted the Jew is, the more he increases and the more he multiplies. There is a quality of resistance in the Jew which comes into play as soon as an unfair attack is made upon him -- that comes to play in a most remarkable fashion throughout the Jewish world. As soon as we lose one political position in one part of the world, we set about strengthening our bulwarks in other parts of the world. That is perhaps one of the reasons for the survival of Judaism.

1. Situation which confronts - serious - desperate
Our approach - hysteria

Were we to take stock - debt - credit -
It is not all a case of losses - gains
Future history in

2. The Germ. situation, dominating - rightly so -

Part of nat. organisation - apprehensions in
less 54% -

Other 96% - not living - same war - beaten

There are large f. corners - at peace

They are not without their problems - initiation

Not free from discrimination

But when we remember - millennium - our post. Ennau
a matter of decades

3. We ought not to delude ourselves - fool's paradise

- that human progress

- This was the mistake - proceeded to give up

- The leaders of f. Assimilation - large candidates

4. But neither are we living in a wilderness, both

- Easy to overestimate - factors

- Ever since our absorption - war conditions -

under fire - not desperate - Cool heads - Fortitude

5) UK England, France, Holland - Bel - Italy - Czechoslovakia - Russia -
Near East - Egypt - U.S. - Canada - No Retrogression
-70% - Civil Rights -

(a) The Area of strain is Central & East. Europ. -
There strong - Antis. -
But - except for - situation w/ no of hopelessness

6). It should be remembered - Central Europ. E.g. Germany
lost - had - 1907 - 1870 -

Middle Ages

There seems to be an element of periodic brutality

(a) But the whole world is for revival ad Germany
Tentative observations

7). In Russia - 3 m. Jews - no Antis. -

8). In U.S. - 9 m. Jews - Antis. - Klan and Nazi
There has always been - underlying etc. - social discrimination

is intolerable

up to 1929

Unless very dark days - Free. suff. back -

(a) One of Hitler's greatest disappointments - Only Germany
Americans

(b) The Press etc.

9/. In Palestine - rapidly - Complete . After 10 years -
New life - free from scars



1. Situation which confronts world J. is serious but not desperate. And our approach to it should be one of seriousness but not of hysteria. When we take stock of what has happened in J. world since World War - we would find much to place on the debit side much on the credit side, the ledger. It is not all a case of losses. There have been some definite gains. And only the historian, the future will be able to determine whether the pluses cancelled the minuses.
2. The German situation is, of course, dominating the J. scene to-day, and rightly so. It is that part of our body national organism which has been lashed, and is now pained, reviving the entire organism to feel the pain. But G. Jewry is after all only 4% of world Jewry. And what has happened there has inspired apprehensions, what may not happen elsewhere. The other 96% are not all living in the same war-torn, humiliated, propaganda-mad world as the G. Jews are, a many nations, the same political or cultural hostilities. There are large J. communities which are at peace in the world - or at least as far as any community or people is at peace in these harassed and turbulent times. They are not without their special problems and irritations. They are not altogether free from these discriminations to which minority groups are ever when subjected. But when we remember that the millennium is not here yet - that the perfect society is still far in the offing - and that our pol. equality even in the most enlightened countries is not only a matter of decades and not of centuries we are justified in not taking a more patient and optimistic view, the others.

3. We must not delude ourselves into believing ⁽²⁾ that we live in a folk's paradise; that human progress has reached the point where racial and religious differences count for little among men, and all are regarded as brothers in our part, human family. This was the mistake which so many of our people made, when they proceeded to live up to their racial & rel. distinctions in the poor expectation that others would do likewise. The leaders of J. Assimilation here and abroad opened themselves, ^{all too eagerly} as candidates for the new society of liberty, equality and fraternity, only to learn that that society existed basely in their own papers, and in their own impatient minds.

4. But neither are we living in a wilderness of hate, surrounded by prying enemies bent upon our destruction. It is just as easy and dangerous to overestimate as it is to underestimate the forces & working against us in the world. Even more in dispersion began there has been action in the world. War conditions aggravate it. Peace conditions attenuate it. Whenever econ. or pol. strife and tension exist the position, the Jew is under fire. When life is again normalized, the situation is improved. We are living ^{now} in such an era of right unprecedented econ. & pol. tension. Our position is again under fire - but far from desperate. We need cool heads and stout hearts to-day - the same measures of patience and faith which our forefathers had in days far more trying than ours.

5. In England, France, Holland, Belgium, Italy, ^{Germany} Russia & Egypt the near East, the V.I. Canada, South Africa - the world where 70% of our people live there has been no retrogression whatever in their civil rights, and no legal restrictions

(3)

The area, strain is Central & East. Europ. Island & Ocean.
Hungary, Austria and ^{Germany} Germany. There are strong antisemitic
movement in all these countries. But for the time being discuss
is pre-trail against Jews, in ~~some~~ ~~fact~~ ~~life~~ Antisemitism. dis-
tributed, esp. in universities, are not in frequent. But the
Jews are far from any in all these countries, with excep.
of Ger - is far from being any, hopelessness religiosity becomes.
They are ~~not~~ maintaining in the poor, great difficulties
their pol. & econ. positions.

6. It should be remembered that Central Europ. part. Germany
was always the hot-bed of antisemitism - There was an
Antisemit. pol. party in Germany in 1907 which won about
1/4 million votes & sent 15 repres. to Reichstag. Back in 1870-
only 1 year after Jew received legal equality in Germ. was first
a well-known antisemit. agitator blaming the economic crisis
that year upon the Jews - Then out the misdeeds - The
meanest & cruellest thing Germany has done was in German
countries - There is an element of the population left in
the German character which added to his arrogance
stubborn and high-handedness, plus his dogmatism and
metaphysical vagaries - which make him the most
unpleasant and meanest Antisemite in the world -

(a) But the whole world is potentially not Germanic,
and Teutonic aberrations are not likely to spread the
world.

7. In Russia - where 3 m. of Jews - there is no problem of Antisemitism.
- It is counter-revolutionary - There is no problem of J. survival - Just may survive the same fate
as all other rel. in auto rel. Russia - That what that is
no one can as yet predict - But as a naturalistic people
and a race people they are not likely to become extinct

But they are under no special disabilities -

(4)

8. In the U.S. - where nearly 4 m. Jews live - there has been an increase of anti-J. sentiment in some sections, the pop. The Klan has tried to make far it into a nation wide movement but failed - And now has been proposed an attempting it again - There has always been there is now is measured discrimination practiced against the Jew in some industries - in some professions - in some privately endowed schools universities - And racial prejudice has always been here - But the situation is far from intolerable. The Jewish comm. up to 1929 in comparison with the rest of the country, has grown and thrived and much '29 it has suffered an Econ. setback together with the rest of the country - Unless very dark days come upon this nation - which for present - and even suffering leads to pol. upheavals of catastrophic scope, it is not likely that the Am. trans-
formed & time-tested traditions of tolerance, freedom and fair-play will go under

One, Hitler's greatest disappointment is the utter failure of his anti-Semitic propaganda to recruit an lot of famable reaction in the Anglo-Saxon world. Only German-Amer. in their eagerness to stand by Germany at all costs and free is politics, have been deluded into making Hitler's program hail, law, order and all

The press, the pulpit, the public forum in America have vigorously championed the cause, the Jews have been extremely sympathetic cooperation.

9. In Palestine a new movement of comm. is developing. The Jewish homeland is developing rapidly.

There is conflict there / but progress is being made in spite
of the conflict. If progress is not interrupted that will
be the great of centuries, the world in the next
10 years - And a new J. life, freed from many of
the scars and wounds which refer to heart, & fatal
life, will arise there after 2000 yrs. ~~handwritten~~ for the J.

10. The J. race is not all black by any means -
There are other def. factors to be registered.

(1) End of Era of Assimilation. The trend in many countries
of W. Europe was from a maximum of life to a maximum
of thence to complete self-annihilation & absorption in
majority population.

(2) ~~The trend from ghetto life to~~

(2) There was a headlong rush away from the J. fold
esp. in the Teutonic countries in the last 50 years.

→ Men helped by this means to overcome the disabilities
under which as Jews they found themselves.

→ Prompted by hopes of advancing their careers,
winning wider opportunities for their children - making lot
of their children laurels.

(3) Baptism + Inter-marriage.

→ Bap. was particularly popular with among ^{the Catholics, W. Eur.} rich Jews,
who are always the first to cut and run, and
thoroughly-trained men, lay & professional, who ~~lost~~
social ambitions hoped for advancement in their
careers.

(4) Assimilation by way of Inter. was far weaker by way of Bap.
(1) Inter. of course, definitely tends to decrease the J. groups
for not only is the birth rate among mixed marriages far
lower, among purely J. marriages - but less than 25%

the children, mixed marriages are raised as Jews.

(4) The increase in intern. may be judged from the following figures. (quote)

11. There has been a definite check to this ^{to assimilation} in all, Central Europe. (Arthur Ruppin - "Jews, To-day" p 203)

(1) Not only has Jews definitely prohibited inter-marriage, but the realization as the part of Jews that intermarriage does not insure a new found ^{by J.} birth to their children, but that their racial identity is remembered with the third & fourth generations - and furthermore, that Even baptism is no shield against antisemitism - was just a red herring but just definite break in the shroud. Long wish to assimilation!

12. The Jews in other parts of the world will not forget this lesson. They will not wish to make the same tragic mistake - voluntarily exposing themselves from their J. spirit & racial home in the hope of being welcomed in an alien home which does not want them - They will not subject their children to the tragic circumstances to which the present generation of young J. Jews are being subjected -

They will raise their children as Jews & train them to face the world as Jews. -

13. TO the ^{question} ~~question~~ then - What can the J. people look forward to today?
Answer - (1) To a future not unclouded - but not by any means
dark & hopeless -

(2) To be under fire again, as he has so frequently before,
until the world situation is tranquilized again

(3) To a more positive and energetic J. life all along
the line - caused by the future, the ~~future~~ ^{depression} ~~assimilation~~, as
well as by the increased anti-J. feeling ~~in some parts of the world~~
caused by the unstable state, the world.

14. What does this changing world mean to the Jew -

(1) Economic - 19th C. - golden era for Jew - Econ. instab.
social groups or pol. state did not interfere - As an econ.
Jew could hold his own - prospered -

(2) With the changing world - the State is beg. to control Econ.
& syndicates & cartels in central industry. Something like the
Nazi guides are being reintroduced. As industry
& trade becomes more & centralized the interest
the majority group will dominate it - the Jew, everywhere
in the minority - will be disadvantaged -

(3) The econ. strength of Jew lay in small, private bus.
These are being wiped out. The large units will not
be very friendly to J. employee; And the state generally
is not going to concern itself much with the fate of the
small merchant & manufacturer - the middle class declines -

(4) It is necessary to take stock of our econ. position in
the world - & esp. is it necessary for us in the U.S.
An effort must be made to balance or adapt our lives

(5) Article

Intermarriage

Germany: Out of 100 ^{Jewish} marriages

1901-04. - 7.95 %

1910-11 - 11.96 %

1925-6 - 19.70 %

1927. 21.33 %

Berlin 1928. 27.36

Hamburg 1928. 33.58

Cologne 1926. 28.50

Hungary

1907-8. 4.33

1921-2. 10.20

1926 16.46

Copenhagen 1900-5. 31.76

Trist 1927. 56.10. - actual majority.

For every 100 pure J. marriage

Germany - 1927 - 54 ~~10~~ mixed

Hungary - 1926 - 28

Berlin - 1926 - 64

Kruslau - 1926 - 38

Budapest - 1927 - 39

Amsterdam. " 30.

Trist - 1927. 255



Average
From 1/4 to 2/3 pure

In U.S. Average 1.17% - among East Europ. Jews negligible

Among German Jews - 5%

1- Not Germany

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE
ANSEL AND E. 105TH STREET ON SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 26, 1933

THE JEWISH PEOPLE--WHAT CAN IT LOOK FORWARD TO TODAY?

The Jewish people throughout the world may look forward to a future not unclouded, but one by no means dark or hopeless. While the German situation is of course dominating the Jewish scene today, it should be remembered that German Jewry constitutes less than four percent of the world Jewry and that the other ninety-six percent are not living in the same war-beaten and propaganda-maddened world as the German Jews are, or among nations of the same political and cultural traditions.

Large communities elsewhere are at peace with the world, at least as far as any community or people can be at peace, in these harrassed and turbulent times. Jewish communities everywhere are not without their special problems and irritations. But when one remembers that the millennium is not yet here and that the political emancipation of our people in the most advanced countries is only of comparatively recent times, a matter of decades and not of centuries, one is justified in taking a patient and optimistic view of the situation.

Ever since our dispersion began there has been anti-semitism in the world. War conditions aggravate it. Peace conditions attenuate it. Whenever economic or political strife and tension occur, the Jewish group comes to find that when life is again normalized, the situation is again improved. We are living now in such an era of almost world-wide economic and political tension and strain. We need cool heads and stout hearts for the tasks ahead: the same measure of fortitude and patience which was our fore-fathers' in days far more trying than ours.

Germany was the classic land of Jewish assimilation. Recent events have put a definite end to the era of assimilation. The trend from now on is likely to be in the direction of a more positive and energetic Jewish life. An effort will be made to provide a secure spiritual home within the Jewish soul for the rising generation so that the tragedy which overtook the assimilated Jewish youth of Germany will not recur elsewhere.

