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How far is the Jew responsible for anti-semitism?, 1933.

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HOW FAR IS THE JEW RESPONSIBLE FOR ANTI-SEMITISM?

WRHS

By

Rabba Abba Hillel Silver

at

The Temple

on

Sunday morning, December 3, 1933.



In discussing the subject of how far our race is responsible for anti-Semitism, it might be said at the very outset that it is fair to assume that even if we were angels, perfect in every respect, beyond sin and beyond reproach, the anti-Semite would not be at a loss to find sufficient arguments with which to denounce us. Prejudice is a logical attitude based on reason and facts. The very word implies a "prejudging", arriving at a conclusion before the evidence had been studied and frequently in the face of contradictory evidence. Prejudice is always irrational and it is motivated by causes which the carrier of prejudice hates to acknowledge to others and even to himself. He will attempt at time to rationalize his prejudice but always, one can easily detect the transparent camouflage of such rationalization. The hidden motive is not so far away that one cannot discover it.

For example, that ancient anti-Semite, Haman told the king to destroy all the Jews. The reason he gave was a high sounding political and sociological reason which he knew would excite the monarch and induce him to sign an edict of extermination -- "that there is a certain dispersed race abroad whose laws are different from our people's and who do not obey the king's laws." A very high sounding reason! Actually, the

real reason for Haman's hatred of the Jews was motivated by his grudge against one Jew, Mordecai, whom he despised and upon whom he wanted to avenge himself by destroying all Mordecai's people.

There are a lot of young people today, for example, of the middle class who are out of jobs. There are a lot of University graduates and professional people who are unable to establish themselves in their professions. There are many Jews who occupy coveted positions. It would help the situation if they could be eliminated. That is the basis of lots of the anti-Semitism of the Nazis in Germany. Such a reason, however, cannot be publicly given, so some very fantastic and exalted reasons are invented, that these Jews are in the way and that their presence is a danger to the soul of Germany.

Now while it is of course true, nevertheless, it would be folly for us to maintain that we do not always provide our enemies with the most dangerous weapons which they use against us and that we use good common sense. We ought not to be deluded into maintaining that we do not all too frequently expose ourselves through our own blundering and blindness to the attacks of our enemies. I shall speak of some of this in a moment.

I want to call your attention first, to a general situation. While it does not involve any moral principle, nevertheless it is very frequently exploited for the purpose

of anti-Semitic agitation -- the general abnormal maladjusted economic status throughout the world. Our economic struggle -- I am now speaking of the economic struggle of the Jewish group here and elsewhere -- is top-heavy. It is unbalanced. In the first place we are over-urbanized. We have concentrated far too much in the city. Of course there are historic reasons for that. But after all, that is an explanation and not a solution. We are over-urbanized, not because we at any time disdained agriculture, not because we do not like farming. For a thousand years or more we were almost exclusively a farming folk. It was only during the last millennium when restrictive laws prohibited the Jew from owning his own land that he was forced into other lines of endeavor. We are over-urbanized. That is the fact and it is not a wholesome fact.

We belong largely as a group to what we call the Middle Class. Nevertheless we do have a prominently large number of our people in Middle Class enterprises far beyond the quota which any other people maintain. Now it is this group, the Middle Class which is under fire today all over the world. Laborer and farmer must under all conditions be taken care of and the prime concern today is to take care of the agriculturing class. In simple terms they are the producers. The importance of the business class has been called into question. It is regarded as unnecessary, even in capitalistic countries

like ours, the Middle Class is undergoing vast transformation. The program of the Middle Class is being tremendously centralized and government is more and more encroaching upon its domains. The Jew being largely represented in this class is being victimized by these changes which are going on. In the first place he is a small individualistic tradesman. He is being liquidated and destroyed. In the second place the overcrowding is gradually creating a tremendous amount of friction and anti-Semitism is being aggravated and intensified.

We are crowded into the professions. We are way beyond our population quota. These professions, Law, Medicine, are very congested. This results in the lowering of standards and income. The Nazis- for example, are exploiting this fact to the utmost against the Jew.

Now, then, it is in this area of the Middle Class where most of the strain and friction exist and from which most of the anti-semitism derives. How can we relieve this strain? Is it possible for us to re-direct the trends of our economic life? Is it possible for us to direct our young people from some of these congested professions to others not so congested? Can we, for example, discover new opportunities for work in which we as a group have not been strongly represented up until now, such as agriculture, civil service, skilled labor? Under the new dispensation, the

the skilled working man and the scientific farmer will enjoy a greater measure of security. He will enjoy a greater measure of economic security. There will be no stigma in this modern world attached, of course, to farming and skilled labor. There is no reason why we should not deliberately direct our people into these fields.

That, of course, means economic planning. I most strongly urge upon our group to set about making a more definite plan for the economic stability of our group in this country. Actually a scientific survey should be made of the whole economic position which we occupy in this country with an eye to future planning and proper vocational guidance.

Now I come to what we may regard as culpable moral shortcomings on our own part which fed the flames of prejudice against us here and everywhere. By way of introduction, I should like to tell you the story of what happened back in 1931, in Spain. A series of bloody massacres swept over the Jewish communities of Spain. These riots ushered in a century of persecutions and disabilities which finally culminated in the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. Inflamed by one Ferdinand Martinez, four thousand Jews were slain in Seville alone. The rest were forced to become baptized. Some seventy other communities were destroyed. In a city like

Valencia, five thousand Jews were killed. Murder, flight and conversion practically wiped out that Jewish community. It was one of the most ghastly persecutions in our history.

What was the reaction of the Jewish spiritual leaders in Spain to all this? They were of course overwhelmed with grief and sorrow. Their hearts bled for the sufferings of the people but in seeking for the cause of these riots, they had the amazing spiritual courage to point the finger of accusation against their own people. They were responsible for what happened there.

Rabbi Solomon Alami, one of the greatest leaders of the age wrote soon after these riots, a letter of warning and chastisement in which he laid bare the wounds which the Jewish people themselves had inflicted upon themselves. Corruptions, the immoral, the unethical conduct, the arrogant display of wealth, their vanities, the rivalry -- the spiritual decay of the Jew was responsible for the bloody persecution which came. He spoke in the traditional vein of the prophets who were never afraid to point the finger of indictment at the past of their own people.

Alami in his document, a bitter document of self-accusation, asks first "Why did all this happen to me? Know ye truly that this thing came upon us through our own hands."

Think of ten thousand lives slain and one hundred thousand forced to conversion. Rabbi Alami blames the Jews themselves. He enumerated the "al chet" of the Spanish Jew. The rich Spanish Jews who held high political positions had forgotten their humble origin, had become proud and arrogant. They drove about in costly equipages. They were most magnificently dressed. The women were decked in gold and precious stones. They were indifferent to the moral teachings of their religious leaders. They despised manual labor and honest toil. They loved idleness, distinction, honor and power. They were jealous of each other. They slandered each other before the authorities. They were dishonest. They dodged their taxes and imposed them on the poor. They loved gambling and hilarious fast times. They did not respect their own Torah. They tried to imitate the Gentile. They would not listen to the voices of their leaders.

Now, my friends, such heroic self-analysis and indictment has been the salvation of our people throughout the world. Woe unto a people that cannot stand up at its own shortcomings and say, "I have sinned!" Such a people is doomed! That is why I believe that Hitler's Germany is doomed. For he does not know how to say "mea culpa!" He is indoctrinating his people with the deception that they are the best, the noblest and most honorable people, that they can do no wrong. That is the beginning of degeneration and collapse among the people.

We Jews have found it important from time to time to take stock of ourselves. If we were a majority population we would not have to pay much attention to those shortcomings. All these shortcomings would not be held against us any more than against any majority group. But we are a minority group. That makes all the difference in the world. It is not enough to be like other people. We must be better than other people. The other people, that is the majority group, doesn't particularly pay any attention to our moral judgment of them. They can afford to ignore it. To a large degree we are dependent upon the majority. Our security and our well-being lies in their hands. Our lot is frankly harder and evocative of greater moral effort on our part. We must be better and more scrupulously just and honest in all of our dealings, not only because of our own racial mandate, and our own moral code. Our own racial tradition demands that we be moral leaders. Our minority status in the world demands it. Unfortunately we have frequently been unmindful of the practical question. In this country as in some other countries, we have drifted with the times.

Business and financial groups among the Jews in this country can be charged with the same sins as the groups among non-Jews, the same imperialism, the same speculation, the same gambling, the same disregard of the stewardship of wealth and the trusteeship of power. The same sins which have, in other

words been chalked up against non-Jews can be chalked up against large numbers of Jews in this country.

We have not been distinguished in this land for our high ethical standards any more than the non-Jewish group in this land has nor have our professional groups been particularly distinguished for theirs. Our average is undoubtedly quite as high as the common average. But that is not enough! That is not the point. The point is that they must be higher. Especially in professions where we are represented by such huge numbers as in Law and Medicine. We are easily singled out. Unfortunately there are all too many in these professions who are a credit neither to their professions nor to our race. There are all too many Jewish lawyers who hire themselves out as professional underlings to the underworld or to the upper-world, business groups who sell their birthright for a mess of potage.

Our Jewish politicians have not been one whit better than the non-Jewish politicians. They are as amenable to graft and corruption as are the rest. Our own City of Cleveland has been particularly unfortunate as to the kind of Jews in its political life. There have been many of them in shady politics and very frequently they have caused our people to hang their heads in shame. Their misdeeds are periodically exposed and spread across the columns of the newspapers. They hurt our

cause tremendously but we cannot protect ourselves against them. We don't know how to control them. Because they happen to be of our race we are saddened by their sins and their corruptions. And a half dozen of these cheap politicians can do more harm than all the good which tens of thousands of honest law abiding citizens can do.

Cleveland has been very unfortunate, perhaps the most unfortunate city in the United States regarding the number of cheap Jewish politicians we have had. We have not been without our Jewish gangsters and racketeers. This is a shockingly new phenomenon. Of course they are the product of local conditions. But that is merely an explanation. Within the last ten days we have read in our Cleveland press of three Jews who were sent to the Penitentiary, two, I believe for arson, and one for being the foremost rum-runner and speakeasy operator in this city. Who created this? Where does it come from?

We are not without some responsibility in these facts, my friends. There are a large number of our people, as there are large numbers of non-Jews who are engaged in shady public enterprises, who are purveyors of vulgar plays and entertainment and who write and publish obscene books and magazines, and who are in occupations where they shouldn't be. They are making our load more heavy to bear from day to day.

Our problem is, therefore, how to remove this evil from our midst, and of that, I hope to speak at some future time.

Through strong and organized community authority, through our institutions and agencies, through schools, through synagogues and temples, through the home, the family welfare, the settlement and the club we can protect our rising youth from the forces which make of them gangsters, murderers and law breakers.

We must bring community pressure upon these corrupt politicians, these dishonest judges, these crooked business men who have not learned to observe the ethical codes of their callings and professions. They should be exposed and rejected by us before non-Jews reject and expose them. But of this we shall speak another time.

The important thing to remember is that in our effort to fight anti-Semitism, here and abroad, to counteract anti-Jewish tendencies, we must not only look abroad, but within ourselves and amongst our own people. We must set our own house in order. We will then be in a stronger position to meet and overcome the enemies that from time to time rise to destroy us.

1.) It is clear that even - angels -

Prejudice is not a logical attitude, based

The very word - a conclusion - without - in fact

Prejudice is always irrational, motivated - ashamed to acknowledge

He may sometimes attempt to "rationalize" - transparent
camouflage - the hidden motives - easily detected.

2.) Hamann - told the King that J. should be destroyed because -

"there is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed
- their laws are different - they do not obey the King!"

- highly important pol. & soc. reasons - Real reasons

3.) There are a lot of young Germans to-day in the middle
classes - out of jobs. University graduates - Professionals.

- There are many Jews who occupy - court - If they
would be eliminated - room in law etc

- But this real reason cannot be given publicly

Race - menace - Save soul of Germany.

4.) This is all true - Nevertheless it would be folly

- provide our enemies with powerful weapons

- expose ourselves - blundering & blindness

- I shall speak, soon, there is a moment.

5- Call attention general situation - no moral turpitude

- frequently ~~at~~ exploited in anti-J. agitation

I mean abnormal, maladjusted econ. status of J. in world

(1) Our econ. structure - top-heavy - unbalanced.

(2) Over-urbanized - Historic reason - not bec. disdain

~~that~~ is explanation - but no solution

(3) We belong to middle class in numbers far
Of-course we have 100,000[±] - abnormally large

(4) It is this class - under fire to-day.
Labor & Farmer.

The importance of business class - Russia

Even in Cap. countries - govt over-encroachment -

concentration - over crowding

(5) The Jew suffers both from centralization for he is small
and from over crowding - competition - Antisemitism

(6) We have ~~are~~ crowded into proportions - overstretched
- lowering standards, income, Antisemitism

- The Nazis have exploited

(7) It is in this area, the middle class - most
strain - friction - from which most A.S. derives

(8) Can we relieve this strain -

Under new dispensation

Natural Planning - Scientific Survey

1. It is clear that even if we were all angels - the
Antis. would find reasons ^{enough} for denouncing us. Prejudice is
not a logical ~~matter~~ attitude, based on reason and facts.
The very word ^{prejudice} implies a "prejudging", a conclusion
arrived at without waiting for evidence - and ~~logical~~
+ ~~rational~~ ~~attitude~~ often turns on the face of opposite
evidence. Prejudice is always illogical, ~~rational~~ and
motivated by ~~hidden~~ causes which the carrier ^{the} ~~prejudice~~
hates to acknowledge to others ~~even~~ to himself.
He will ^{sometimes} attempt to "rationalize" his prejudice, if
he has to, but it will be a transparent camouflage.
The hidden motive will be easily detected.

2. Haman told the King that J. should be destroyed
because - ~~they~~ are to make a huge sum of
money. That reason for it - they are
a scattered etc etc - ~~that was the propaganda~~
He knew that this reason would excite & persuade
the King. It was good prop. material.

The real reason was that he hated a
certain Jew, Mordechai, for some slight offence to his
honor, and he sought to avenge himself on the
Jew by destroying all his people -

3. There are a lot of poor young men today in the
middle classes who are out of job - ~~both~~ ^{both} ~~unemployed~~
graduates & people who can't make a
living - There are many Jews in them

position. If they could be eliminated
there would be more room for themselves - in law, in
industry, in teaching, ~~in~~ in government, in many other
collateral positions -

~~These~~ A room must be found for eliminating these
econ. rivals - So Race Myth is perpetuated -

There must be driven out not to ^{make room} ~~for others~~
for other job seekers - but to save the soul of humanity -

4. That is all fine - Nevertheless, it cannot be folly for
us to maintain that we do not frequently
provide an evening with powerful weapons
against us - To ~~you~~ ^{we} expose ourselves
to their attacks. ~~though~~ ^{we} are
Unwilling and Unwilling. I shall speak, now
there is a moment.

5. But I should like to call your attention to a general
situation ~~of~~ ⁱⁿ which involves no questions of moral
sanctions - but which nevertheless has been at the root
of much of our agitation. I mean the abnormal,
neglected econ. status of the Jew in the world -

(1) Econ. structure is top-heavy and unbalanced.
over-urbanized - Historical reason - not bec. we
despise agriculture - were farming folk -
But an explanation is no solution. We are
over-urbanized -

(2) We belong to Middle Class, ~~largely~~ ^{the} in numbers

far beyond the proportion among other peple. (of course) we have an hundred, thousands of dates and etc. - But an abnormally large number belong to class of traders, etc. etc.

(a) It is this class which is under fire to-day. Labor & farmer must credit all credit to be taken care of - They are the producers in simplest sense of term - The importance of ^{the business} ~~social~~ class has been called into question - as in Russia - where it has been destroyed - In cap. countries it is undergoing vast transformations - It is being highly centralized & just is now more encroaching upon its domains - It is also overcrowded.

~~(1) The Jewish merchant, who is largely~~
(1) The Jew suffers both from this centralization
+ over crowding - He is a small individualistic tradesman - is outdated!

Over crowding creates bitter rivalry = antisemitism.

(b) ~~It is in an~~ We are crowded into the professions and these are already congested -

(1) Contribute to lowering of standards, incomes
competition with non-Jews - & antisemitism.

(2) The Nazis have ~~used~~ exploited this fact
to the utmost as there would wish to abolish

6. It is in this area of the middle class where most of the strain exists to-day, & from which most of the Anti-Semites -

(a) Can we release this strain? Is it possible to revise & redirect our econ. trends? Can we divert many of our peopl- from Congress-ship? - Can we discover new opportunities in fields where we have been only slightly represented till now - agriculture - civil service - skilled labor - Can we give vocational guidance to our youth?

b/ Under new dispensation the status of worker & farmer - carry far more econ security - no stigma.

(c) National Planning - Scientific Survey with an eye for the state - warlike planning for the sake of econ. stability & our ~~for~~ 4 1/2 m of our people in the country -

7 - And now to come to what may be regarded as culpable ^{unreal} shortcomings in us which feed the flames of ~~our~~ prejudice ~~the~~ against us -

6 - And now I come - our culpable were shutterings - feed flames

In 1391, a series of bloody massacres swept over the Jews of Spain. ~~It was the beginning of a century of blood & terror, which was to culminate in the complete extinction of the Jews of Spain in 1492.~~ It ushered in a century of blood & terror, which was to culminate in the complete extinction of the Jews of Spain in 1492. Explained by the fanatical preachment of an Ferdinand Martinez, 4000 Jews were slain in Seville alone. The rest were forced to become baptized. The rage, the popular mob, over the large J. communities of Cordoba and Torres and several other communities - of the 5000 J. in the city of Valencia, not a soul was left. Murders, flight, a conversion completely wiped out that J. community - It is estimated -

What was the reaction of the less spiritual leaders of Sp. Jewry to all this. Of course, they were their hearts bled for the misfortune, their people. They were overwhelmed with sorrow & tragedy. But - in seeking for the causes of their bloody visit against their people, they did not set the blame on the Wickedness & cruelty of their persecutors. With amazing of courage, they dared to point the finger of accusation against their own people. They, too, were at fault! They, too, were responsible for the disaster which had overtaken them. In the regard of fool and lusty they were not blameless!

R. Solomon Alami - one of the prominent R. of that time - indicated an "olam" - "a letter of Censure", in which he laid bare the wrongs in the body of Israel, (self-critic) the sins, the people, the corruptions, the immoralities, the unethical conduct, the arrogant display and their vanities, ^{the disruption, rivalry and dissensions} the spiritual decay of the Jews, the low day - especially of the wealthy and powerful among them. He spoke in the classic traditional vein, the prophets of his race, who dared to confront their people with their own evils and misdeeds - who strenuously refused to blame other peoples for the calamities which overtook their own people.

Alanis, "Letter" is a document full of better ^{national} self accusations & fall and warm word -
אלאניס, "התעלה" היא מסמך מלא של ביקורת עצמית וביטויי חום ורגישות.

He enumerates the 16th of the 17th Jew. - specifics & tearful

- (1) The rich - powerful - were in high status - close to the throne
have forgotten their humble origin - Itam became proud arrogant
built them palaces - dress about in the costliest
equipages - wear magnificent apparel pride - dealt
at their women daughters in gold, pearls & precious stones.
- (2) They are indifferent to moral teachings, their riches
- (3) They despise manual labor and honest toil
- (4) They love idleness, distinctions, honors & power.
- (5) They are jealous & hate each other, little rivals, They inform
against each other & stand before the authorities.
- (6) They are dishonest - dodge their Taxes & impose them
upon the poor. They persecute Eas - while their poor starve.
- (7) They love gambling and belamine past times, and in
all things imitate the gentile.
- (8) They do not respect their ancient Torah - their faith -
they do not hearken to their Rabbis - They lack
piety, devotion and humility.

2. Rich Jewish self-analysis & indictment has been the substance
of our people. The permission to exploit adversity for self-
enrichment has been given to our people - and it has stood
us in good stead in all our crises. We were a
people that would not stand up to its own misdeeds,
and with which has not the usual courage to denounce
crimes - - 1960 - 1964 - 1968 -

Such a people is doomed. That is why Hitler's Germany
is doomed! It does not mean him to say "Mein culpa!"
It indoctrinates its people with the sp. corroding doctrine
& self deception that it is the best - the most favorable
the most honest - the most moral people on earth. That
is the beginning of degeneration & collapse —

3. I do not know how much our moral faults and shortcomings
as a people are responsible for ^{to-day} Antisemitism. That I am convinced
that they are far from being the main cause. But that
these shortcomings are seized upon by Antisem. propagandists
and played up to their maximum, needs no great proof
or argument. The real causes are seldom acknowledged by the
Ant. propag. - racial + rel. intolerance, econ. rivalry, private
jealousies + prejudices - snobbery - the need for a handy scapegoat
for national blunders & disasters - ~~the need~~ ^{the need} to achieve
bigger things would be to condemn oneself. The victims ^{become} must
be ~~made~~ ^{made} saddled with the responsibility for his own
undoing. That is, of course, true! Nevertheless, we have many
shortcomings which ~~all too frequently~~ ^{are} all too easy
for our enemies to lay hold of. We must from time to time confess our faults. Less &

4. Were we a dominant majority in the countries, the need
these shortcomings would no more be held against us any
more than they are counted against any majority group
or people. But we are a minority - and that makes all
the diff. in the world. It is enough to be like other people.
We must be (better) morally than other people. Our moral
judgment, the majority population is of little concern
to it. It can afford to ignore it. But the moral
judgment of us by the majority pop. cannot be
ignored! We are dependent upon it. Our security
and well-being lie in ~~these~~ ^{its} hands —

5. This our lot is: harder, & it also evokes a great moral effort on our part. We must be better, more scrupulously just and honest and also refrains, not merely because our own racial mandate, our own moral code, our own tradition demands it of us - but because our unenviable status as a minority group in the world makes it imperative for our preservation.

6. And we have not always been unscrupulous either, the racial mandate is, the practical considerations.

7. We have drifted with the tide. [↓] ^{↑ industrial} ~~The~~ business financial groups among the Jews ^{in this country} can be charged with the same sin as that there & among the non-Jews. The same materialism, the same speculation, the same greed, the same disregard for the stakeholders, wealth and the sanctity of friendship & power which has been checked up against non-Jews can be checked up against Jews large numbers of Jews. The fact that we are concentrated in a relatively few branches of trade, commerce, industry, finance, our econ. interests are proportionately large.

We are our professional groups - distinguished for their high standards of ethics and probity. Again, they are average standards may not be lower. That is not the point! The point is that, they must be higher - and they are not! And in sum, the prof- non-university the Jews are represented far beyond their population proportion. Here they are everywhere largely in evidence and early neglected out. There are altogether too many J. lawyers who are not a credit rather to their profession as to their people - agents, the unscrupulous shorts

8. There are on terrific habits - And we must find
ways of ridding ourselves, this accursed blood - 18721
777A 111 -

9. Then education in school, in ^{by 60000} ~~club~~ in settlement, then
wholesome recreation, then community guidance, then
family welfare work. We must reach the young
generation, and ~~destroy~~ ^{protect them against} the forces which make gangsters,
murderers & law breakers -

We must bring community pressure upon the
dishonest lawyer, the unscrupulous politician, the
dishonest judge, - ^{the unethical business man & employer} ~~but then some~~ they should
be treated like social lepers + outcasts. They
should be denied our vote. They should be
exposed ^{+ rejected} by us, before others expose them!

10 - All this means a strong comm. org. - & a strong
sense of comm. responsibility + comm.

power -

of that, I shall speak at some future
time
