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My design for living, 1934.

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MY DESIGN FOR LIVING

By

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At

The Temple
on

Sunday morning, January 14, 1934.



It is regrettable, my friends, that most people have no design for living, and those that do, have acquired it almost too late, when they are almost through with living. Most of our lives are spent in groping and wearisome questing, in trying to piece together the broken pieces of a picture puzzle of life, the central design of which we really do not know.

The great men of the world have this advantage. They can foreshorten their period of groping and questing. Very early in life they discover their objective or their goal, and very early in life they determine upon the strategy of reaching their objective. But most folks are ordinary people, quite ordinary human beings, and consumed in from day to day tasks which somehow are unrelated to some central design for living, and oft-times confused and uncertain as to what it is all about.

This form of life, which is the human lot of most people, is not, however, ignoble. It is only given to a few to grasp a full scheme and design early in life and to organize their life with the aim of realizing that plan or central purpose of living.

In times of great upheaval, when worlds are crumbling all about us, we are driven to follow. We are forced to ask ourselves certain questions which in normal quiet drifting times we do not ask ourselves. We begin to wonder what it is all about.

What is the significance of these trials which are visited upon us, these tribulations to which we are subjected? What is the purpose of life? What is the purpose of our life and are we wisely directing our lives to that purpose?

In times of trouble, men are driven more and more upon themselves, to their own inner worlds. Men try to find a foothold, a spiritual foothold when everything is shifting and uncertain. And they are likely to find this foothold within themselves, in their own immediate circles, of family and friends, and not in the outside world. When a storm raves outside, men huddle around their own fireside and find warmth and security among their own familiar faces, within their own familiar sphere.

That is, I believe, what is happening to a great many of people today. And unfortunately so. When material possessions are lost, as so many people have lost them in recent years -- or when their fugitive and uncertain character becomes clear, men begin to grope almost instinctively, to look for other compensations which life can offer. They look for spiritual values as distinguished from the physical, in terms of things and substances. They look for a design for living which is not built around this illusive and deceptive thing, prosperity or wealth or material success. They begin to look around to spiritual values for satisfaction and contentment in life. They will discover that these values for which they are reaching out are not new values. They are pretty much today what they were

in the olden days. They do not change with the mutations of individuals.

There are certain human values which were precious in the sight of men 5,000 years ago which retain their identical worth in the world today and which will be equally precious in the sight of men 10,000 years hence -- values such as integrity, courage, loyalty, kindness and self-restraint. No civilization can get along without them. Whether it be Fascism, Communism, or Capitalism, whether the era be one of faith or atheism or agnosticism; whatever your position, your station, your belief, your economic or political confession, these values are indispensable to you in life.

Any civilization of any complexity must be built upon these fundamentals of character, private or public. And it is here, my friends, in these spiritual values of character that a design for living must begin -- in the inner life of the individual.

There are so many people in the world today who would like to build or rebuild a world without first upbuilding themselves. There are so many people who would like to reconstruct society along new patterns of truth, freedom and equality without first setting about reconstructing themselves. That is what defeats so many revolutionary movements. Ultimately a permanent

social revolution is based on the spiritual re-adjustment which takes place in the life of the individual men and women within the group within the nation.

I am afraid that it is easier by far to prescribe for the world than to prescribe for oneself. That is why sages so often administered peace. First correct yourself! Administer to yourself and then administer to others. The Greeks had a similar proverb. "Heal thyself first."

If you want a world in which there will be greater justice, why first look to your own little world where you are the dominant pattern. Look to your family, your friends, your office. See whether you are establishing justice and see whether you are just in your direct contact with those human beings within your own sphere. Then when you have established a full measure of justice within your own world, then reach out and seek to apply the social mandates to your world without. If you want justice, control, tolerance, why look to your own world first. See how much love, control, tolerance and justice you apply to your relatives friends, children, to your immediate circle.

It is very hard to prescribe for the world. For any design for living is primarily a design for living for yourself, and must begin within the intensification of your own personal character. Now such a noble design for living which begins with

the coordination of one's inner life around basic ideals of personal conduct will quite naturally pass over into social enterprises and mandates. For after all, man lives in a community where the individual life in order to grow must draw its nourishment from the soil of the community. Our individual lives are immeasurably broadened and enlarged as we broaden their contours for as we probe beyond our private destiny, we embrace also the community destiny.

What are these social mandates? Why these social mandates are the immemorial tasks of the human race, the quest for truth, for justice, for peace.

Now these social values appear differently to different people. They appear in different garbs. What is truth to you may be truth to someone else but not in the same degree. What is important is that you be sincerely convinced that the particular garb in which your truth appears is not a disguise and that you are not hoodwinking yourself. This is a favorite device of mortal men. There is no fixed or arbitrary measurement of ascertaining truth.

What is significantly important is that you are sincerely convinced that the truth as you see it is not a disguise, that you are not hoodwinking yourself, fooling yourself, deceiving yourself, while suspecting or knowing that behind the disguise there is a real truth which you are afraid to acknowledge or to accept.

Now in these social mandates of truth, justice and peace, I sincerely believe. I believe they are worthwhile because I believe in humanity. I believe in the slow, painful progress of mankind. I believe that the present, so full of imperfection, is only a stage, a station in the endless march forward of the human race.

I believe in its future in spite of the innumerable defeats which mankind suffers from time to time. I believe in humanity as the dwelling place of personality which is eternally unfolding itself in truth and goodness and beauty. Because there is design in the universe, I look for design in humanity and for design in the private life of men and women. In other words, I believe in man because I believe in God.

I believe in man's personality because I believe that the whole universe is personality, that it is all a manifestation of some omnipotent intelligence. For those who see no worth and no meaning in human destiny, a design for living is a contradiction. It is really in the way.

I spoke of truth. Truth seeking should be part of the design for living of every thoughtful man and woman. We will never know the whole of truth. A man must have a mind as vast as the universe to know the universe. Man is mortal and he is also unfortunately limited by the construction and the inadequacies of his mental apparatus. Man is limited and his

knowledge at best is fragmentary and distorted. Nevertheless, there is an amount of truth which man may acquire by seeking and questing which if acquired little by little, iota by iota, does contribute to the enrichment of his life and to the expansion of his horizon.

It is in this quest for truth that the crown as well as the cross of human life can be found. Now it is not so easy to seek truth. Man must overcome his own resistance to truth. Man is given ^{to} mental slothfulness. Men dislike the disturbing quality of new ideas. Men don't like to surrender routine for initiative because initiative means effort and readjustment while routine is so easy. A new truth when served to man is never palatable. Instinctively man resists work.

The world today is full of half-truths, catch-words and slogans and never in the history of civilization has the human race been so victimized by propaganda which is official lying and which is an attempt to bias human judgment. Never has there been such an attack made upon the human intellect as in the present age. In every avenue, human judgment is controlled by one interest or another, not to enlighten one, but to exploit one -- government propaganda, business propaganda, through the press, the pulpit, the platform, the radio -- everywhere.

You have vast agencies making an onslaught upon the human minds. They force it not by logical persuasion but

by delusive methods, by making you do what in a cool moment of rational judgment you would not do. Therefore it is particularly important in this age that men devote themselves to truth-seeking. That is our birth right. The future of human progress is based upon our ability to distinguish truth from the unreal. "Strive for the truth unto death and the Lord God shall fight for thee." You may make yourself unpopular by speaking the truth very often. But a design for living, my friends, which is based on popularity is no design for living.

I spoke of justice. The issues of social justice are uppermost in the world today. The battle lines are drawn today. The struggles of today and tomorrow have to do with economic justice. I always believed that the quest for justice is a part of the design for living. Religion has taught me to believe in doing justly. I am fully convinced that the fullness and freeness of human life is possible only under a socially organized and socially motivated economic system. The system under which we have been living until now has been one of ruthless competition, bordering on anarchy, built for private profit. So I have identified myself with all those movements in society which make for progressive socialization of industry and of economics.

I am convinced that some very desirable human values which we enjoyed under the old dispensation will be lost under the

new dispensation. I suspect that under this social bureaucratic system, much of what we enjoyed may have to be sacrificed. You can't eat the pie and have it at the same time. But clearly the old dispensation has been tried and has collapsed. And now the world is trying something new. That something new will be under a centrally planned and controlled system of economics. It need not be Marxian, Communist or Fascist. But it will certainly be nearer to these systems than to that we called rugged individualism.

I spoke of peace. The quest for peace is part of a design for living. War, I am persuaded is bad and the aftermath of war is worse. I have lived through one war and I am confirmed Pacifist. I realize that the war solves no problems but creates new ones. Thus we entered the war to make the world safe for democracy but actually it made the world safe for autocracy. I am persuaded that preparedness is no insurance against war but a provocative to it. I know that Pacifism is a spiritual movement which will never win over the masses of people in the world and I therefore do not look to the abolition of war by way of Pacifism. The masses of the world are Pacifist in mood. I therefore believe in setting up an international and inter-dependent agency for international arbitration without which mankind cannot do. The choice is clear today. Either the old-fashioned aggressive nationalism,

armament or war, or the new idea of inter-dependent nationalism with agencies for compulsory arbitration, leading to disarmament, the outlawing of war, and peace. You must choose one or the other. Your design for living must be based on one of these.

In my design for living, if my design for living were analyzed, I would be labelled still as a liberal. But I have not lost my faith in liberalism as a way of life and thought. I know that the present day world is hostile to liberalism. Dictatorships are now in vogue. I know that in the disillusioned and unhappy world today people are rushing to dictators and saviours and are seeking short-cut methods to salvation. I am however persuaded that these apocalyptic hopes are doomed to disillusion. There are no Messiahs in the world. No Messiahs are available today. Humanity must be its own Messiah.

I believe in freedom. I believe in the free exchange of ideas. I believe in man's inalienable rights to dissent and non-conformity. I believe that it is only out of conflicting opinions, out of debate, out of exchange of ideas that all new truth is born. I want to be, myself, free to live my own life. I want to be free, of course, within a full measure of social responsibility. Abuse of living is not freedom. Abuse of living does not make man free. It just makes him a libertine. So much for the social mandates.

As far as my private life is concerned, I prefer the old sanctities and the old loyalties. Some one said "If you want new ideals, practice the old ideals." I am not impressed

with the moral vagaries of our day. I have seen one or two revolts of youth come and go. I have seen the wild groping of our age outside the boundaries of self-discipline and responsibility where no freedom and no happiness can be found. The simple truth remains that given health and physical well-being, the real enduring satisfactions of life come first from congenial work -- any kind of work, just so it is congenial -- congenial to your soul and to your mind. President Masaryk, of Czechoslovakia, once said: "All honest workers are equal, and a good blacksmith is no less admirable than a good president." Congenial work. "Whatsoever thy hand attaineth to do by thy strength, that do!"

From that comes the abiding satisfactions of life. And also from warm friendships and from contact with the best that has been achieved by the hand and mind of man through the ages. And above all, from the love of a woman and the pride of children. It is from these worlds of beauty, of worth, that the real satisfactions of life, my friends, come. All else is vanity and the striving after wind. Great wealth, many possessions are vanity. But these are the real things: to live among your fellow men and to try to bring a little more of truth, justice and peace in the world, to work at something that is significant, congenial, to have friends, not many friends, but some real friends, to keep incontact with art music, books and to love someone.

That life is the kind of life well worth living.
It is bound to be. In spite of the inevitable sorrows which
come to everyone, life will have great peace, beauty and
happiness.



✓ Then apocalyptic hope doomed to tragic defeat

✓ There are no miracles - Humanity -

✓ Dictators have darkened the lights in the temple, miracles.
✓ Freedom - free exchange of ideas - undeniable right
to dissent -

✓ Right of man vs. / Inst - class

✓ Conscription - Hate it! - punishment & class, that.

11. ✓ Private life - old sanctities, loyalty - new life -

✓ Not impressed with hypocrisy, moral vapours, or dog

✓ Have seen one or two Revolts, Youth can do

✓ Have seen wild fury, an eye for freedom & happiness

inside the boundaries of self-discipline & respectability

✓ One who abuses liberty is simply a blatherer - not a free man

12. ✓ The simple truth remains that enduring contentment
& life, given health & physical well-being, come from

✓ (1) Co-operation with - Res. Narayana

"All honest workers are equal - and a poor blacksmith

is no less admirable & a good President!"
"Whatever they have attained to do by their strength - that do!"

✓ (2) Warm friendships

✓ (3) Content with best that has been achieved by the

✓ (4) The love of woman and the pride of children -
- Y's it is to be the first in the world

13. All else is vanity and a driving after wind.

1. It is regrettable -

Most of our life is spent -

trying to ~~put~~^{piece} together parts of picture puzzle whose designs we are not sure of.

The great ^{mean} can one-shotter the quest Early in life, they discover their objectives and fix upon the strategy -

But most folks are ordinary human beings - and lives are spent in day-to-day tasks - unrelated to any central pattern - often confused and uncertain as to what it is all about. This form of life is not ignoble and it is the lot of most of us.

2. In times of great upheaval - worlds crumble - men are forced to think about their destiny. They begin to wonder what it is all about - what meaning is there to all the trials which they must undergo - what is the purpose of their life - and ^{which} has their life been wisely directed.

(a) They are driven in upon evs. - to our inner world. Spiritual port-hold -

People huddle close -

(c) When material possessions are lost or their future and uncertain character becomes clear - men turn to look for other compensations which life can offer - for a design for life which is not built around this unpermeant, illusory and deceptive thing - prosperity - or wealth - a material success - But around spiritual values

3. These values, the inner life are not new - pretty much -
Do not change with mutations -
Qualities of personal character previous - 5000 - with
Integrity - courage - loyalty - self-restraint - kindness
They constitute the essential pattern of a pleasing, harmonious
and helpful personality.

(b) Faith communist, capitalist; ^{whether} pietist, atheist, agnostic;
whatever your station, your belief, your pol. or econ. conviction
these are the qualities which are indispensable
to you in life, or else you are consigned to ultimate
defeat. One's inner life must be constructed upon
these enduring foundations - or it collapses.

4. And it is here where one's desire for living must begin.
There are many people who reconstruct the world
outside, and from without - to build a new world for
humanity. without first upbuilding their own inner
world. - This defeats so many movements at
social reconstruction - Permanently successful
revolutions - based - upon sp. sad specimens
within individuals.

(b) It is easier by far to prescribe for the world

(c) people who will not do

(d) expos -

(e) If you want to see - justice - love - so many
reformers who would like "sweetness & light"
as themselves harsh, censorious, intolerant

- 8/ Justice - The wrongs social justice an unhappy affirmation -
Battle-lines are drawn - Struggle now to-day & to-morrow
for econ. justice - Revolution caused by it -
- (1) I have believed - as my religion has taught me to
believe - that religion is "doing justly etc
 - (2) Fullness & freedom & human life possible - under
widely organized - motivated econ. systems
 - (3) One has seen on , without competition , leading
in anarchy , built for private profit .
 - (4) I developed my ref. - socialization

- 9/ Peace - War is bad - after war there - Peace therefore
was - confirmed pacifist - Solves no problem -
- ✓ Entered war to make
 - ✓ Persuaded for
 - ✓ I knew that Pacifism - is weakness -
 - ✓ The choice is clear to-day - aggressive action -
a interdependent nat. - aggressive arbitration - leading
to disarmament peace -
 - ✓ I have chosen latter - Jewish .

- 10/ Intel. - had lost faith - present day hostile -
- ✓ Intolerance & Bigotry & hate
 - ✓ A disillusioned unhappy world - searching - serious &
seeking short-cuts -

5 - A little danger for living which begins with coordination of one's inner life around basic ideas & personal conduct, will grow naturally from war into social mandates. For one's life is part of life of society, building it and moulded by it - one does not live in a social vacuum - and one's life crises life cannot grow unless it is in the soil and sunshine of the group. Our life individual lives expand immeasurably as they broaden their outlines and as they reach beyond the personal to embrace the social destiny.

(a) These social mandates concern mankind's universal truths - the quest for truth, justice and peace.

(c) For each man, truth, justice & peace, will appear differently and in diff. garbs - The important thing is to be genuinely convinced garb - not disguises - deliberately hood-wink oneself - Tarant's device.

6 - I believe in them - believe in humanity - in its slow ascendant progress - high destiny, of which our imperfect present is only one station along the march.

(a) I believe in humanity - because I believe in the Universe as the dwelling place of divine personality, unfolding itself eternally in wisdom, beauty and goodness. Not a blind, unfeeling machine.

(b) Because there is divinity in nature - there must be divinity in human life, part, the universe.

(c) I believe in man because I believe in God. I believe in
worth-whileness, human life, because ~~with~~ all that is
part of great purpose has worth & is meaningful.

~~After all we must start with some faith in at least
something to~~

(d) In those who see no worth and no meaning in
human destiny - a desire for living is a contra-
diction in terms - illogical and in the way
they think

7. Truth - Man never knows truth - Mind as vast as universe -
Zeus - minds constructed by inadequate channels of
cognition - fragmentary - distorted -
But some truth - cumulative

(a) Truth is our cross-crown - uninstaling

(c) Must overcome our own resistance - mental sloth -
desire for destroying new ideas ^{new truth was palatable} unwillingness to
surrender to routine for instruction -

(d) World full of half-truth - catchwords - slogans -
propaganda never so organized - to bias man's
judgment - Hitler -

(e) Truth - on both sides -

"Strive for the truth unto death, & the Lord God shall fight
for thee"

Abstract of the address on "My Design for Living", delivered by Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver at The Temple, Sunday morning, January 14, 1934.

It is regrettable that most people never have any design for living and that those who do, acquire it almost too late, when they are about through with life. Most of our life is spent in groping and in wearisome questing. This is both the glory and the tragedy of human life.

In times of great upheaval, when worlds are crumbling, men turn for refuge to their own inner world. They look for a spiritual foothold somewhere and they are likely to find it, if at all, within themselves, or within the close, intimate circle of family and friends. People huddle close to the family fireside when the storm rages wildly outside and they find warmth and security very close to their own hearth.

The moral and spiritual values of our inner world are pretty much the same today as they ever were. They do not change much with the mutations in systems of government or economics. The qualities of personal character which were precious in the sight of man 5,000 years ago hold their identical worth today and will retain that worth among men 10,000 years hence--integrity, courage, loyalty, self-restraint, social-mindedness. They constitute the essential pattern of a pleasing, harmonious and helpful personality.

And it is here where the design for living must begin. There are many people who would like to reconstruct the world from without--to build a new world for humanity without first up-building their own inner world. This defeats so many movements at social reconstruction. Permanently successful social revolutions must be based upon inner spiritual readjustments within the hearts and minds of individual men and women. It is easier to prescribe for the world than for one's self.

A noble design for living which begins with the coordination of one's inner life around basic ideals of personal conduct will quite naturally pass over into social enterprises and mandates. These mandates concern mankind's immemorial tasks--the seeking of truth, justice and peace. One's life gains immeasurably as it broadens its contours and as it reaches beyond the personal to the social destiny.

For each man truth, justice and peace will appear differently, in different garbs. The important thing is to be sincerely convinced that these garbs are not disguises, or that one does not deliberately hoodwink himself. This is a favorite device of mortal men.



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gods?
O.T. Ecclesiastes
Apr 5 IV:28

I spoke of justice. The issues of social justice are uppermost in the world today. The battle lines are drawn today. The struggles of today and tomorrow have to do with economic justice. I always ^{have} believed that the quest for justice is a part of the design for living. Religion has taught me to believe in doing justly. I am fully convinced that the fullness and freeness of human life is possible only under a socially organized and socially motivated economic system. The system under which we have been living until now has been one of ruthless competition, bordering on anarchy built for private profit. So I have identified myself with all those movements in society which make for progressive socialization of industry and of economics.

I am convinced that some very desirable human values which we enjoyed under the old dispensation will be lost under the

new dispensation. I suspect that under this social bureaucratic system, much of what we enjoyed may have to be sacrificed. You can't eat the pie and have it at the same time. But clearly the old dispensation has been tried and has collapsed. And now the world is trying something new. That something new will be under a centrally planned and controlled system of economics. It need not be Marxian, Communist or Fascist. But it will certainly be nearer to these systems than to that we called rugged individualism.

I spoke of peace. The quest for peace is part of a design for living. War, I am persuaded, is bad and the aftermath of war is worse. I have lived through one war and I am *have become a* confirmed Pacifist. I realize that the war solves no problems but creates new ones. Thus we entered the war to make the world safe for democracy but actually it made the world safe for autocracy. I am persuaded that preparedness is no insurance against war but a provocative to it. I know that Pacifism is a spiritual movement which will never win over the masses of people in the world and I therefore do not look to the abolition of war by way of Pacifism. The masses of the world are Pacifist in mood. I therefore believe in setting up an international and inter-dependent agency for international arbitration without which mankind cannot do. The choice is clear today. Either the old-fashioned aggressive nationalism,

armament ^{and} or war, or the new idea of inter-dependent nationalism with agencies for compulsory arbitration, leading to disarmament, the outlawing of war, and peace. You must choose one or the other. Your design for living must be based on one of these.

~~In my design for living,~~ If my design for living were analyzed, I would be labelled still as a liberal. But I have not lost my faith in liberalism as a way of life and thought. I know that the present day world is hostile to liberalism.

Dictatorships are now in vogue. I know that in the disillusioned and unhappy world today people are rushing to dictators and saviours and are seeking short-cut methods to salvation. I am however persuaded that these apocalyptic hopes are doomed to disillusion. ^{There} are no Messiahs in the world. No Messiahs are available today. Humanity must be its own Messiah.

I believe in freedom. I believe in the free exchange of ideas. I believe in man's inalienable rights to dissent, ~~to (in matters of conscience)~~ and ~~non-conformity~~. I believe that it is only out of conflicting opinions, out of debate, out of exchange of ideas that all new truth is born. I want to be, myself, free to live my own life. I want to be free, of course, within a full measure of social responsibility. Abuse of living is not freedom. Abuse of living does not make man free. It ~~just~~ makes him a libertine. ~~So much for the social mandates.~~

As far as my private life is concerned, I prefer the old sanctities and the old loyalties. ~~Some one said "If you want new ideals, practice the old ideals."~~ I am not impressed

with the moral vagaries of our day. I have seen one or two revolts of youth come and go. I have seen the wild groping of our age outside the boundaries of self-discipline and responsibility where no freedom and no happiness can be found. The simple truth remains that given health and physical well-being, the ~~real~~ enduring satisfactions of life come first from congenial work -- any kind of work, just so it is congenial ~~congenial~~ to your soul and to your mind. President Masaryk, of Czechoslovakia, once said: "All honest workers are equal, and a good blacksmith is no less admirable than a good president." Congenial work. "Whatsoever thy hand attaineth to do by thy strength, that do!"

~~From that comes~~ the abiding satisfactions of life, ~~and~~ ^{FROM SUCH} work ^{AND} also from warm friendships and from contact with the best that has been achieved by the hand and mind of man; ~~through~~ ^{AND} ~~the ages.~~ And above all, from the love of a woman and the pride of children. It is from these worlds of beauty ^{AND} of worth, that the real satisfactions of life, ~~my friends,~~ come. All else is vanity and ^a ~~the~~ striving after ^{THE} wind. Great ~~wealth,~~ ^{and} ~~many~~ ^{is} ~~possessions are~~ vanity. ^{THESE ARE THE REAL THINGS:} ~~But~~ these are the real things: to live among your fellow men and to try to bring a little more of truth, justice and peace ^{to} in the world, to work at something that is significant, congenial; to have friends, not many friends, but some real friends, to keep in contact with art, music, books and to love someone.

That life is the kind of life well worth living.
It is bound to be. In spite of the inevitable sorrows which
come to everyone, life will have great peace, beauty and
happiness.

