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What a rabbi learned from the Depression, 1934.

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WHAT A RABBI LEARNED FROM THE DEPRESSION

By

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple
on

Sunday morning, January 28, 1934.

I have walked among men during these last four hard years and I have seen how they bore up under the load of the depression, how they reacted to the adversities which were visited upon them. And I gained some penetrating insights into the makeup of people from the manner in which they encountered their unexpected misfortunes.

Many of these people I knew quite well. I was amazed to discover in them in many instances such rare evidences of strength and in other instances such pitiful evidences of weakness. The depression has drawn aside a curtain which concealed the real life of many individuals and revealed their true essence, revealed the stark naked truth about themselves and their spiritual makeup. My respect for many people increased immeasurably during these last four years and my pity for many others.

Some people simply went to pieces under the strain of misfortune that overtook them, they who had moved so confidently and so assuredly on the favoring tide of prosperity believing that they themselves were greatly responsible for their great good fortune and not the favoring winds of the world about them. Then the furious squalor of adversity attacked them and they simply became demoralized, overwhelmed, crushed. They became terrified and quite helpless. Their hands slipped from the steering wheel. They lost the power of pilotship. They resigned themselves to the certainty of disaster and some of them even anticipated it and ultimately destroyed themselves.

Many people have commented about the large number of suicides among American business men since 1929, some very caustically.

Recently, I read the following comments:

"The large number of suicides among the financial and industrial leaders of the Republic, and among the well-to-do generally, since the stock market crash of 1929, emphasizes a fact hitherto not generally recognized. It has usually been considered that your successful business man is a hard-headed, practical fellow, with plenty of courage and stick-to-it-iveness. These heroes of commerce and trade, it has been thought, were men of mettle and guts. Did a rival succeed in putting over a bigger and better deal? Then your business man (the hero of numerous stories in The Saturday Evening Post and The American Magazine) promptly set forth, a veritable knight of industry, and achieved a greater success. Your business man has been pictured not only as hard-headed, practical, with his feet firmly planted on terra firma, but also as a vigorous, aggressive, courageous doer of mighty deeds, a leader and a fighter.

"What is the fact? The depression has revealed him as a confused and puzzled child whose balloon has burst. It has shown him up as a man whose faith has failed him, whose illusions have gone haywire, and, succinctly, as one who can dish it out but who can't take it. In an amazingly large number of cases, this hero of trade has become a helpless

whiner, a weakling stripped of the garment of power he once flaunted gloriously, and a suicide.

"The self-made man, priding himself on having carved out his own career by reason of his superior strength, cunning and intelligence, is stunned by the discovery that he is helpless. His courage, ever dependent upon the jingle of dollars in his pockets, fails lamentably when there are no dollars to jingle. His faith in himself and in the world he has helped to make ebbs away.

"Few artists or poets, few "dreamers," are so easily ruined by adversity. Few proletarians -- and these few usually broken by disease or old age -- are driven to despair by economic mischance. But your Babbitt, when he is wiped out in the market, when his wisely selected bonds become worthless, when his property is foreclosed, whines wails and often, kills himself.

This judgment is rather unfair in so far as it generalizes about an entire class. It is true that there are many business men who buckled under the strain of the last four years, who could not stand up under disaster. It is true that many of them were found to be wax in the hand of destiny which the heat of adversity melted. You and I have known such people. These people overestimated their own importance and their own contribution to their private success. They underestimated the fact that the rising tide of prosperity lifts every ship, small or large, seaworthy, or unseaworthy, good or bad. They underestimated the element of luck or chance which goes into the makeup of individuals. The ancient Greeks

maintained that there were three great powers which ruled the world: wisdom, strength or power and lastly, luck or chance. And the last may be regarded as the most efficacious, the most important.

The Spaniards have a proverb: "Give your child luck and you can throw him into the sea." A recognition of this fact will make the individual humble and will give him a sense of humor, and when misfortune does overtake him, will prepare and enable him to smile and not pin all responsibility on himself, not blame and reproach himself entirely for what is not entirely his fault.

A failure to acknowledge this fact will make men foolish, proud, pompous and self-important and when the pins of their economic life are knocked from under them, when the handiwork of their lives lie in wreckage about them, they will feel humiliated, degraded. Many of them will be mortally wounded.

Such men, too, staked everything on business success. Everything else was secondary, family, wife, children, home, friends, self-cultivation, civic responsibility. Everything was on the periphery. Their one dominant and consuming interest was success. When they lose out there, the center of their life is gone. They collapse. Their fortunes have gone and their reason for living was gone.

There were many during these hard years of depression who were not driven to the extreme measure of self-destruction, who nevertheless acted as though life had been drained of all meaning. They became morose, irritable, bitter and chronic complainers. They began to take it out on their wives, their children, sometimes on their friends if they let them. They turned their homes into

complaint bureaus, as though their wives and children were responsible for the depression. Generally speaking, they acted like poor sports.

Foreigners have observed and commented that the American talks about the depression and complains. Last year, André Maurois wrote an article in which he contrasts the reaction of the American to the depression with that of the Englishman. Of the United States he writes: "In the United States the crisis is an obsession. The faces you see are faces stricken by a catastrophe. Mysterious fears haunt the hearts of Americans."

Of England he writes: "Of course, as everywhere, people talk here of the crisis -- but the English talk about it with humor, with philosophy. It's a common topic of conversation, but it is not the only one."

"Everybody tries to keep to the old agreeable things of life... Meals are much more simple, clothes worn are not so new, houses are run on a smaller scale. But gaiety still remains."

"Whether the matter concerns his own life, or the life of the nation, an Englishman does not express his feelings. This reluctance to self-expression is due partly to his timidity, partly to his speech-restraint, but also to his will-power."

Now the fact that we do talk about the depression is due to the fact that for so many years we led a charmed life. We were used to such long periods of extraordinary prosperity and such high standards of living that when suddenly we were pulled down from the heights to the depression, we were bewildered. We could not adjust ourselves

readily to the fact, while the Europeans, who never enjoyed such a high degree of prosperity, whose fluctuations for the year were not so sharp, were not called upon to make such ghastly adjustments. It is true, nevertheless, in many cases -- in extreme cases, that men did grouse a great deal, and complain a great deal.

I have known people during the four years of the depression who were known as "Lord Bountifuls" and who were noted for their philanthropies when they were exceedingly prosperous, and when their incomes were curtailed and they began to retrench, the first thing they retrenched on was charity, as if charity was something to give out of superfluity rather than sharing the things you need with those who need it more.

Long before some men changed their mode of living, they had changed their mode of giving. They continued to live in magnificent homes, to entertain lavishly, to deny themselves very few luxuries and no comforts to speak of. But they stinted to the bone on their contributions to charitable, civic and religious institutions. Those men never had a sense of social responsibility and the depression found them out.

I have known women, during these years of the depression who harassed their husbands and drove them almost to desperation because they failed to provide them with things which they believed they were entitled to. They nagged and humiliated their husbands. They would point to other husbands of friends or acquaintances who,

in spite of hard times were able to amply provide for them. Instead of cheering and comforting their husbands, they made them drink to the last draught the bitter dregs of humiliation and defeat. Such women were never helpmates and companions. They were just cheap exploiters and parasites, and the depression found them out, too.

I have known children, young men and women, during these years who were tried and found wanting. They suddenly discovered that their careers were being interrupted by the inability of their folks to provide for them, to finance them through school and college, or to provide them with the things to which their affluent homes had accustomed them. They resented it as though their folks had deliberately interfered and marred their future. They, too, were poor sports who did not know how to play the game of life.

All that was weak in an individual, the depression ferreted out, brought out and laid bare. But also all that was strong and noble was ferreted out. There were many people, in fact most people whom the depression did not expose but rather vindicated them. People abroad have been amazed at the remarkable patience which the American people manifested during these trying years. Of course they talked a great deal about it as I have said before. But it was all so sudden, so bewildering. But they did not resort to violent agitation, to any turbulent outbreaks, to revolutionary propaganda. Millions of men were unemployed and are still unemployed in this country -- the number is larger than in any other country in the world. Fortunes were lost, and the savings of a life-time were lost in

hundreds of closed banks. Men lost their homes, their businesses, their farms and their jobs. And yet the American people carried on, not in a sullen, dark, rebellious mood but rather in a quiet, patient, determined hopeful mood, sure of itself and confident that at long last they would find a way out.

Millions of men wrenched themselves loose from their jobs, their accustomed places and habits and transplanted themselves to other ways and to other standards of living. They were compelled to make new adjustments to a new economic environment. They did that without resentment, without anger, readily. That to my mind shows that our people have not been enervated by a long period of prosperity, that we have not become decadent. Within this American people there are vast reservoirs of strength, a great deal of resourcefulness, a great deal of resilience and the wholesomeness and the optimism of youth.

I have known people -- and so have you -- in these last few years who suffered terribly from the calamities which came upon the people -- the business men who saw fortunes which they had accumulated vanish into thin air, untold enterprizes into which they had invested years of life, disintegrate and crumble into dust, reserves which they had set aside for their old age and for their families, just simply disappear. Yet these men carried on and are carrying on quietly, neither whining nor complaining, with a splendid dignity.

I have known families which have been compelled to make painful and drastic readjustments in their mode of living, radical revisions in their standards of living, its members forced to forego many of the things to which they had been accustomed. Yet they made these adjustments

with dignity, honorably, having lost nothing of what is really essential and intrinsic in life in their economic transmigration from the land of plenty to the land of want.

I have known men and women who perhaps for the first time since their early married life discovered how much they really meant to one another and how much they really needed each other, how inextricably their destinies were inter-twined in these hard and testing years of the depression. Some of the old faith and confidence was revived in them, to face life together again, to work, to struggle, to build anew, even though their hearts are a little more wearied and their shoulders a little more bent with the loads of the years. The impact of care, my friends, the uncertainty of their future have brought men and women closer together in search of that warmth and security of understanding love and devotion. "Sweet are the uses of adversity!" Many a woman has discovered her forgotten man and many a man has discovered his forgotten woman in these years which tried their souls.

I have known women in these four years of depression who have been compelled to supplement the incomes of their husbands to balance the budget who have gone to work. I am certain that many are happier and healthier because of it. That brings pride and joy to the heart. So many American women were neurotic because they sensed, however imperfectly, that in the economic scheme of their home they were not needed and when their romantic roles of pampered plaything

was played out, they were superfluous. Women who feel that much depends upon them, that the stability and security of a home rests quite as much upon them as upon their husbands feel strengthened and enriched. "Sweet are the uses of adversity!" Many people discovered that in the last four years.

I have knowd children, young men and women, who as a matter of course abandoned the hopes of careers, the promises of the future, the prospects of achieving their own personal ambitions, turn their backs on all that and rallied to the economic defense of their homes and turned their hands to a thousand and one things to help maintain their homes, being a help to their parents. Such magnificent display of character and courage has been the rule, my friends, rather than the exception. I believe one comes away from a survey of what the depression has meant to the character of people with increased respect for men and women, with a realization of what great depths of power there really are in the souls of men and women.

During the four years you and I have observed men and women become more sober. The librarians say that never before have men and women turned to reading worthwhile books as in this year of depression. People have begun to wrestle with reality. Many of the foolish notions have been knocked out of the heads of the young people. They want to know the why and wherefore of things. They want to reach down for the real things. They want to find other companions in life now that money and wealth are denied them.

They want to find the permanent and the durable in the midst of this chaos.

The depression has not been without its value to our people. I believe, my friends, that people were best able to withstand the onslaught of loss who had worked out for themselves some philosophy of life, those who had before the depression, either perfectly or imperfectly, worked out some program of living, some philosophy of life -- they were best able to endure what life suddenly brought upon them -- I mean those men who never had been taught or trained to see life as one uninterrupted holiday, in a world where the skies are always blue and the sun is never overcast, those who understand that many dreadful things may come about in the course of human life, that there is hardly a human life that escapes his full share of fortune and misfortune, that one should be prepared and when that sudden turn comes, you accept it quietly and stoically, those people who are a little disillusioned about the glamors, promises of human life, those who were a little bit disillusioned about this romanticism of life who did not expect too much from life were best able to endure the hardships of the last few years.

Those people whose philosophies kept them from becoming too acquisitive, those whose philosophies saved them from the fever of competitiveness, those not consumed by the passion of being at the very top, of being the biggest fish in the pond, of grabbing everything in sight, those who were reconciled to the more modest

and really more satisfying compensations of life, and who do not expect too much, those who are resigned to excel in the mastery of self rather than the mastery of the world -- those people were best able to endure the hardships of the last four years.

And lastly, those people came out best from under the strain of these last few years were those who have known where to find refuge in their day of trouble. The refuge of human beings in their days of trouble are first of all in the "island within," in their own inner world of courage, faith, steadfastness, hope, in the world of your mind and your soul. Steady contemplation, the quest for truth and beauty, of nestling within the bosom of your family and your friends, of love, devotion and kindness -- that city of refuge, my friends is always there for the harassed and the troubled and persecuted among human beings.

André Maurois

"In the U.S. the crisis is an obsession. The faces you see are faces stricken by a catastrophe. Mysterious fears haunt the hearts of Americans."

of England, he writes

"Of course, as everywhere, people talk here of the crisis. But the English talk about it with humor, with philosophy. It is a common topic of conversation, but it is not the only one."

"Everybody tries to keep to the old agreeable things of life... Meals are much more simple, clothes worn are not so new, houses are run on a smaller scale. But gaiety still remains."

"Whether the matter concerns his own life, or the life of the nation, an Englishman does not express his feelings. This reluctance to self-expression is due partly to his timidity, partly to his speech-restraint, but also to his will-power"

1. I have walked among men in the last 4 yrs. and had seen how they lure up under the depression - how they reacted to adversity. I gained some penetrating insight into the make-up of people, from the way they met their trials. I got to the inner areas of some people from the manner in which they encountered their unexpected misfortunes. Some of these whom I ^{thought} ~~knew~~ very intriguing and understood quite well, amazed me either by the a display of unexpected strength, under strain, or unexpected weakness. The depression drew curtains aside - and one could see, perhaps, for the first time, character + personality, in their raw stark truth and nakedness - the revealing selves, men & women. My respect for many men & women increased immeasurably - and also my pity for (many) others.

2. Some people simply went to pieces when financial misfortune overtook them. They who had lived so confidently and so self-assured ~~along~~ ^{carried glory by the friendly winds of fortune} the promising side of prosperity, convinced that all their good fortune was, their own making and a just tribute to their gifts and abilities - were knifely overwhelmed - ^{crushed and} demoralized, when the forces opposed of adversity crash down upon them. They became terrified and great helpless. Their hands dropt from the turning wheel. They yielded themselves up to the certainty of down and disaster - and some even anticipated it by destroying themselves.

3. Many have commented upon the numbers of suicides among Am. bus men since 1929. Some very caustically. (Just)

This judgment is unfair - in so far as it generalizes ² about an entire class. It is true that many ~~people~~ ^{people} under the load. Could not stand up under disaster. Were way below where the heat melted - You and I have known such - (1) Over-estimated the contribution which they in person made to their own success - (2) Under-estimated that a rising tide lifts all ships - regardless of their size or equipment ~~under~~ element chance and luck - in a man's success - 3 great powers which rule the world

δύναμις - power -

κρίτος - strength

τύχη - luck - last most efficacious!

^{spanish - "¡viva, ¡viva, ¡viva, and you can throw him into the sea"}
Recognition, then - makes men humble - & gives them a severe humor and also teaches them how to meet and share their shadows when they lose out - as in a game of chance.

Failure to recognize the lay element, the external and fortunes in our success - makes us foolishly proud, and prompts - & self-important - and when the pins are knotted from under us, when our ^{pride} handwriting is wrecked about us - we are humiliated, crushed, morally wounded.

(4) Such men, too, belong to the class which statters all on business success - All else is secondary in their lives - wife, children, home, friends, self-cultivation, civic duties etc. - All are on the periphery of his dominant, and overriding intent - Success! When they lose out then - the center, their life is gone - They collapse. Their fortune is gone. Their reason goes down very soon - Reliance on property is the want of self reliance.

(5) Those who are not driven to extreme, self destruction, withdraw out as if their life had been emptied & leaving a vacuum. They become ^{more} moose, a bitter, or chronic complainers - They take it out on their wives, their children, their friends, if they'll let them. They turn their troubles into complaint bureaus ^{they grow} and treat their wives as if they were ^{the cause of} responsible for the depression. ~~As~~ Generally speaking they are bad sports.

(6) Foreigners have observed & noted this tendency on part, many Americans to talk depression & complain - André Maurois (quote)

(7) Also, y. course, to our having being "spoilt" by ^{our "charmed life" by} long periods of extraordinary prosperity - and high standards of living. The Europeans, have never been accustomed to so much standards. Their requirements are; much more modest. The fluctuations are much less sharp. The adjustments are much easier.

(8) Especially in generosity. I have known men who were noted for their philanthropy when they were exceedingly ^{very} prosperous - but as soon as their incomes were curtailed, and they began to retrench - the first thing they retrenched on was their charities - as if charity were giving from superfluity, and not sharing that which, as, needed, with those who used it more. Long before they changed their mode of living, their mode of giving had changed. They continued to live in mag. homes, to entertain lavishly, to deck themselves very few luxuries, and no comfort to speak of - but they stuck to the bone on their contributions to char. and charitable institutions. Such ^{was} really unreal generosity and the depression forced them out.

(9) I ~~know~~ ^{know} women who have in their years of depression harassed their husbands, and driven them almost desperate, because they failed to provide them with the things which they believed themselves entitled to. They ~~would~~ ^{would} ~~not~~ ^{may} and ~~punish~~ ^{punish} them - ~~They would~~ ^{point} to their friends or acquaintances who continued to be ample providers in spite of the depression. They would imply - or state - their husbands were incompetent, ~~and~~ bunglers or Rather than cheer & comfort, thus, then the weary heart, & ease the tired soul, they made their husbands drink to the last drop the bitter drops of defeat. They were never help-mates and companions. They were always ^{cheap} ~~exploited~~ and parasites - and the ~~depression~~ ^{depression} found them out, too.

(10) I know children - young men & women - who were free and pride waiting in their hard years. They suddenly decided that their careers were interrupted by the war, the fact to prevent them through school and college, or to provide them with the things to which their affluent home had accustomed them. They remembered it. They felt as if their parents had willfully ruined their future, had ruined ^{dealt properly with} ~~ruined~~ them. They, too, were poor parts - and did not know how to play the game, life....

11. That there were other many others - the great majority of the people are there - the great majority, the same people whom the Dep. far from expanding them, only vibrated them.

(1) They have been amazed at the remarkable patience which the am. people displayed during these 4 years - It is true they talked a good deal about it - for it all

received it so sudden, so uncomfortable, so building, but
they did not resort to violent agitation, to turbulent
outbursts - to revolutionary propaganda. Millions of men
were unemployed - greater, any where in the world. Fortunes
& the one gangs life - time was lost in 1000's of about
banks - men lost their homes - their farms - their
business - their jobs. And yet! The Am. people carried
on as if in a calm, rebellious mood - but in a quiet,
determined and hopeful mood - sure, sure, confident
that at last it would find the way out. (over)
A sp. decadent people has not act in this way. Evidently we have not been completely overwhelmed by our careers & ambitions.
there is a vast reserve strength in our people - possessing unusually hard work - of experience - and the unquench-
able plains of youth.

12. I have known men who have suffered severely in the last
4 years - lost fortunes which they had accumulated years
with their own endeavors into which they had
invested years, life valued reserves which they had set aside for their old age devoted
to nothing - and yet they weathered as happy carey as any one.
They weathered where, no complaining, no tax the world with
their misfortunes. I have known families which have been
compelled to make painful and drastic readjustments in their
needs, living - radical revisions in their standards, having
been forced to forego many, the things to which they
had been accustomed - and yet they did it all, quietly,
uncomplainingly, with dignity, humility - having lost
nothing, what is really essential and indispensable in life
in their econ. migration from the land, plenty to the land of want.

When we reached themselves free from their accustomed
place habits and handicapped eyes - to the ^{places} ~~other~~ - to
other vocations - to other standards of ways, living - They
adapted eyes - They acclimated eyes a people - They
came as! — struggling to better day - of food,
shelter, play, security for all —



I have known husbands and wives, who perhaps for the first time since their early married life, discovered, in the terrible time, the hard years, how much they really needed each other, how much they meant to each other, how unexpectedly their destinies were inter-twined; same thing; the old faith and the old Covenant was revived - to face life together again, to work, to struggle to build anew - even though the hearts are a little tired, and the shoulders a little bent with the weight of the years. The impact of war, and the sudden threat to their home, the uncertainty of their future, but drawn closer together, seeking the warmth of comfort of understanding; love and devotion. Sweet are the uses of adversity". Forgotten Man! Forgotten Woman!

IP I have known children - young men & women - who readily and as a matter of course - abandoned the hopes, careers, the call of personal ambition - and rallied to the common defense, their homes - doing any stupid thing - risking anything to save - to help - There has been ~~unparalleled~~ such unprecedented display of character and courage has been the rule - not the exception and one comes away, from a survey, the sp. reactions of our people to the plebs; a new renewed appreciation of the worth of human beings - purged many poor notions of values

IP to be fundamental - thames - Art-Music - to be in reach - fewer people are dismissing their frames with their best - Simple pleasures -

13. they - and say, I decided that those who had a sound philosophy of life, have been able to withstand the worst effects, the fear, the dis- like that I mean those who

(1) Have not been taught or trained to see life as one uninterrupted holiday - in a world where the skies are always blue - and the sun is never darkened - by clouds

(2) Those who understand that "many undesired things may happen in the course of life" - that hardly a human life

I have known women who in order to meet the modest family
budget, & to help their husbands have gone to work. Many
the women are ^{and healthier} happier ^{than} they have ever been before.
They have discovered that they are ^{fine partners & contributors} necessary - ~~valuable~~ ^{valuable}
and that brings pride and joy to the heart. So many American
women ^{were} ~~are~~ remotely because they served, however
unperfectly, that in the war scheme, therefore,
they were needed - and when their romantic
role ^{of a woman's place} ~~was~~ ^{was} played out, they ^{felt} ~~were~~ ^{felt} superfluous.



escapes its medley sorrow and misfortune - that one
should, in a measure, anticipate & be prepared for an unfor-
tunate turn, the wheel of fortune ^{in all these changes} and when the turn
comes - to accept it ~~graciously~~ ^{simply} & ~~tristly~~ ^{tristly}.

- (3) Those who are, ab initio, a little disillusioned about
the romantic, glamorous promises, human life, and
are reverted to ~~a more modest position in the world~~ ^{a more modest and actual}
and really more satisfying compensations & life - and
who do not expect too much.
- (4) Those who are not consumed by the passion for acquisition,
by the fever of competition, by the craving to be at the
top ^{to be the highest peak in the world}, and to grab the whole world in their avid
and insatiable grasp - Those who are resolved to
excel in the work, & not, rather than in the world, the world.
- (5) Those who know where man's refuge lies in time
& trouble - with in himself - ^{Nothing can hurt you here - but yourself} - in faith, courage, & confidence,
with in the world, the heart & mind - in study and
contemplation, in great, truth & beauty ^{and} rather the
home, his family & friends - in love, devotion and
kindness.

SUICIDE AMONG THE BABBITTS

by ERIC HOWARD

THE large number of suicides among the financial and industrial leaders of the Republic, and among the well-to-do generally, since the stock market crash of 1929, emphasizes a fact hitherto not generally recognized. It has usually been considered that your successful business man is a hard-headed, practical fellow, with plenty of courage and stick-to-it-iveness. These heroes of commerce and trade, it has been thought, were men of mettle and of guts. Did a rival succeed in putting over a bigger and better deal? Then your business man (the hero of numerous stories in *The Saturday Evening Post* and *The American Magazine*) promptly set forth, a veritable knight of industry, and achieved a greater success. Your business man has been pictured not only as hard-headed, practical, with his feet firmly planted on terra firma, but also as a vigorous, aggressive, courageous doer of mighty deeds, a leader and a fighter.

What is the fact? The depression has revealed him as a confused and puzzled child whose balloon has burst. It has shown him up as a man whose faith has failed him, whose illusions have gone haywire, and, succinctly, as one who can dish it out but who can't take it. In an amazingly large number of cases, this hero of trade has become a helpless whiner, a weakling stripped of the garment of power he once flaunted gloriously, and a suicide.

(Self-extermination, in the case of the defeated financier, is not the variety that Balzac described as suicide from ratiocination. Nor is it the philosophical type, by which a man who has lived fully decides to live no more. Instead, it is the pitiful gesture of weakness and despair.)

(The man who has lived by success alone has nothing to live for when success is gone. The man who believed that he was a strong and mighty fellow, of great importance to the world, is morally bankrupt when economic circumstances give him a kick in the pants and demonstrate that his success is not the product of his own superior cunning and wisdom. It is an unbearable blow to one's self-esteem to discover, for example, that one's investment in American Can is no more intelligent than betting on a dark horse in a race.)

✓ The self-made man, priding himself on having carved out his own career by reason of his superior strength, cunning and intelligence, is stunned by the discovery that he is helpless. His courage, ever dependent upon the jingle of dollars in his pockets, fails lamentably when there are no dollars to jingle. His faith in himself and in the world he has helped to make ebbs away. He consorts with others of his kind, and they endeavor to cheer one another, as they have done for three years past and are still doing. He discusses, childishly, the cause of the depression. He hopes, vaguely and blindly, for "times" to get better. He believes in God and Hoover; then he believes in God and Roosevelt. But in his heart is dull despair, childish fear, in his eyes a look of puzzled grief. The suicide of desperation follows.)

✓ Few artists or poets, few "dreamers," are so easily ruined by adversity. Few proletarians—and these few usually broken by disease or old age—are driven to despair by economic mischance. But your Babbitt, when he is wiped out in the market, when his wisely selected bonds become worthless, when his property is foreclosed, whines, wails (gives a creditable imitation of a White Russian cursing the Bolsheviks) and, often, kills himself.

in his hands and dollars in his pocket, we have already seen—in his treatment of his employees; in his restrained and often enforced contributions to charity, usually well publicized; in his contempt for the financially unsuccessful; in his arrogance and snobbery, based upon the illusion of his own greatness; in his scorn for the weak and the helpless and the impoverished; in his treatment of menials; in the suspicion with which he eyes all who are engaged in "impractical" pursuits; in his persecution of those he regards as enemies of things as they are; and in the development of the current American code of ethics which prescribes that it's all right if you can get away with it.

Among the salutary effects to be credited to the depression is this: That fine flower of our civilization, that milestone on the pathway of Progress, the typical American business man, no longer enjoys the esteem and admiration of the world. Whereas, formerly, we were all too willing to accept him at his own valuation, we now see him as he is.

He can dish it out, but he can't take it.

Drop a tear of pity, if you will. But Jovian laughter resounds throughout the states. This—this puzzled, helpless, weak little man—was our hero!

The Editors are comforted to know that at least two groups of the unemployed are being well taken care of—our 96 United States Senators, and our 435 national Representatives.

BOOKS TO OWN

EMINENT VICTORIANS
By LYTON STRACHEY
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sermon 400

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE, ANSEL AND
EAST 105th STREET ON SUNDAY MORNING, JANUARY 28, 1934.

WHAT A RABBI LEARNED FROM THE DEPRESSION

Some people simply went to pieces when financial misfortune overtook them. They yielded themselves up to the certainty of disaster and some even anticipated it by destroying themselves. Among those who buckled under the load and melted like wax in the heat of adversity were those who had over-estimated the contribution which they themselves had made to their own success and who under-estimated the large element of chance and luck which goes into every man's success.

There have been many, though not driven to the extreme of self-destruction by the depression, have nevertheless acted as though their lives have been emptied of all meaning because of their financial failures. They are morose, bitter and chronic complainers. They take it out on their wives and children and friends, if they permit them. They turn their homes into complaint bureaus and treat their wives as if they were in person responsible for the depression. Generally speaking, they are poor sports.

I know women who have in these years harassed their husbands and driven them almost to desperation because they failed to provide them with the things which they believe themselves entitled to. They nag and humiliate them. They point to the husbands of friends and acquaintances who continue to be ample providers in spite of the depression. Rather than cheer and comfort their husbands, they make them drink to the last drop the bitter dregs of defeat. These women were never helpmates and companions. They were always cheap exploiters and parasites, and the depression found them out.

What A Rabbi Learned From the Depression

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I have known men who were noted for their philanthropies, but as soon as their incomes were curtailed and they began to retrench, the first thing they retrenched on was their charities. Long before they changed their mode of living, their mode of giving had changed. They continued to live in magnificent homes, to entertain lavishly, to deny themselves very few luxuries and no comforts to speak of. But they stinted to the bone on their contributions to civic, religious and charitable institutions. Such men and women really never had a high sense of social responsibility and the depression found them out too.

On the other hand, I have known men who have suffered terribly in the last four years, who saw their fortunes dwindle, their enterprises of a life time crumble into the dust and the reserves which they had set aside for their old age and the securities of their families, dwindle to nothing, and yet they carried on quietly stoically. They neither whined nor complained nor taxed the world with their misfortunes.

I have known husbands and wives who perhaps for the first time since their early married life discovered in the testing times of these hard years, how much they really needed each other, how much they meant to one another. Something of the old faith and the old covenant -- to face life together again, to work to struggle, to build anew, even though the heart is a little tired and the shoulders a little bent with the weight of the years. The impact of care, the sudden threat of their homes and the uncertainty of their future have brought men and women closer together, seeking again the warmth and comfort of understanding love. "Sweet are the uses of Adversity." Many a woman has discovered her forgotten man and many a man has discovered his forgotten woman in these years which tried their souls.