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The things men live by, 1934.

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

THE THINGS MEN LIVE BY

There are a few elemental basic motives which are common to all men and which are the dynamics of most of the significant actions of human beings. They are the things men live by and for -- the permanent "appetites" of men, the things which may be called "passions" -- for men suffer if they do not possess them.

The first of these is love. Men speak of sacred and profane love, a physical and spiritual love. This is an unreal and artificial distinction. All love is sacred unless it is profaned and desecrated by selfishness or lust. There is nothing physical that has not in it the seed of the spiritual. There is nothing spiritual that does not express itself physically. God created man out of the dust and the earth but fashioned him in His image. The love of a man for a woman, of a parent for a child, of a child for a parent, of a man for his friends, is one of the great things men live by and sacrifice for. They are exalted by it and triumph through it. And when suffering and misfortune come upon them they are sustained by the knowledge of some great love, present or past. Even the memory of a love makes rich the life of men and women.

Faith is another of the things men live by. It is the halo which human life casts round pain and suffering and death and the apparent indifference of nature to man's struggle and aspirations. Man must believe that life is worthwhile, that work and effort and sacrifice are not vain and futile things. I have known men who struggled valiantly for a new social order and who believe themselves to be unbelievers and atheists. Yet they must believe in human progress in the future of mankind, in the efficacy of good deeds, in some far off desirable goal. But these are all unscientific dogmas. They are postulates of human faith -- demonstrable facts. Faith is above and beyond reason. Men do not become martyrs through knowledge or wisdom, but only through faith.

Work is another thing men live by. Everything that lives has work to do in the world and fulfils itself through work. Men work to sustain themselves in work but also to express that which in them craves and cries for expression. Work may become a curse if it is drudgery. But no drudgery is as great a curse as the curse of having nothing to do in the world. The bane of our present civilization is that it consigns so many millions of men to enforced idleness, thereby breaking their pride, destroying their morale and denying them the sacred privileges of fulfilling their destiny -- creative labor.

The hope of recognition is another thing men live by. Men want to be praised, admired, respected, loved. They want their handywork praised. "A good name is to be preferred to great riches." And the wise man prefers it. This love of honor is not an unworthy motive in human life unless it becomes extreme and turns into a morbid passion for acclaim or publicity.

We do not choose these things we live by. They choose us. We are prisoners. And in this prison we are truly free.

THE THINGS MEN LIVE BY

Delivered by
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
at
The Temple
on
Sunday Morning, October 28, 1934



We speak of this person or that person. We say that this person did this thing because of this or because of that. And yet how little we understand the person and how much less we understand the motives which prompt the individual to do that which he does.

The word person comes from a Latin word "persona" which means mask -- a mask which the actor wears on the stage. In a sense all men wear masks. Their real feelings are hidden. Their real motives are unrevealed.

The rabbis say that there are seven things which are hidden in the eyes of men. And one of the seven things which is hidden is: "What is in the heart of the man, that no one else knows." There is a beautiful blessing in the Psalms which always puzzled me but which now seems so much more clear to me: "Every man walketh in an image."

There is a beautiful Midrash of the rabbis, the Midrash on the Book of Deuteronomy which says that there is not an acre of ground that is not filled with spirits, evil spirits. But each one of these spirits filling the universe has a mask before its face. Comment of the rabbis seems to suggest that the whole of nature is masked and that the eye of man is permitted to see only what the eye of man can see.

That is why we are so frequently admonished not to judge men by the sight of our eyes, not to judge men always by their actions or by their manners but to try as far as possible to probe into the heart of the man, to understand the why of his actions, of his conduct, of his manner.

Take, for example, half a dozen men. They are all charitable men. They all give gifts to the poor and yet one may do that because he is afraid of public opinion, because he is afraid of being criticized by his fellow men. Another man may do it because he is afraid to die. Another man may do it because he would rather give it to charity than give it to his relatives. Another man ^{may} do it because he wants the adulation, the praise of his fellow men. He wants his name blazoned in the public press. Another may do this out of the sheer love of his fellow men -- out of pity -- out of human instinct. The acts are all alike. But how varying and different are the motives.

Here are half a dozen men who commit crime. They are sinners in the sight of men. One may have committed his crime because of a motive of revenge. Another, because he is indolent and prefers to take that which he does not wish to earn. And still another, because he is pressed by desperate necessity, because he wishes to support someone he loves. And still another, because early in life he was thrown into the wrong kind of company and the whole course of his life was turned into evil ways by unfortunate association. Still another may commit a crime because he was an orphan and had no training or guidance of dear ones. The acts are the same. And yet how different are the motives which drive men to do that which they do.

Who can probe the mysteries of the human heart? That is why men should have such a large measure of sympathy when judging their fellow men. Try not to judge at all but to understand!

Nevertheless there are a few elemental basic motives which are common to all men which may be regarded as the major dynamics of human action -- the things men live by -- the things men live for -- the permanent "appetites" of human life, if you will -- the permanent hunger of man -- the enduring passion of man. Passion, by the way, is derived from the Latin word "passio" which means to suffer. Passion is something which makes a man suffer until his desire is satisfied. There are certain permanent passions in human life which if not satisfied make men suffer -- the things men live by.

The great Russian Tolstoi wrote a beautiful story whose title is "What Men Live By". It is the story of an angel who was disobedient to his God and was punished by being sent down to earth to live as a mortal. The angel had been disobedient because he was sent down to earth to bring back the soul of a certain woman. When he went down to earth he found this woman lying alone and desperately ill. She had just given birth to twins. She recognized the angel and said to him: "Please do not take away my soul. I have just buried my husband who was killed in the forest by a falling tree. I have no kith or kin. There will be no one to take care of these children. Let me live on and nurse them for they cannot live without father or mother.

The angel was moved to pity. He returned to Heaven and did not bring back with him the soul of the woman because of the two little children. He said to the Lord, "No children can live without to earth father or mother." The Lord said unto him, "Go back/and bring back with you the soul of the woman and you will learn three things --

what is in the heart of men, what is not given unto man and what men live by". The angel went down to earth and took the soul of the woman. A wind came by and took the soul out of his hands and the angel felt his wings fall from him and he fell to earth a mortal, naked and cold, in the cold winter.

As he sat, a cold and hungry mortal, a peasant passed by him and the peasant himself was cold and shivering. He had ^{on} but one thin garment. He saw this man. He passed by and did not stop. After having gone a short distance he said to himself, "What is wrong with me? How dare I pass this cold shivering man? Am I too proud to help him?" He took the garment from himself and clothed the naked man. He took him to his home where there was little to eat. His wife at first refused to give him food because she had so little. Then she said to herself, "What is the matter with me? Have I become a devil?" And she fed him. Then the angel learned the answer to the first question -- What is in the heart of man? The answer was -- Love is in the heart of man.

The angel became an apprentice to this peasant who was a cobbler and worked there. A rich man came to the hut of the cobbler and brought some very valuable leather and commanded the peasant to make him a pair of boots. He was proud and haughty and ordered the cobbler to make him the best boots he could. At the end of a year if the boots showed no sign of wear and tear he would pay him ten roubles. And if at the end of a year, they did show signs of wear and tear he would have him locked up. And as the rich man left the hut of the cobbler, he forgot to stop and hit his head on the door. Before his sleigh reached home

he was dead. And so the angel learned the answer to the second question -- What is not given unto men? It is not given unto man to know what is really needed for his body. No man really knows what he needs.

After a while the angel learned the answer to the third question -- What men live by. After a few years a woman came to the peasant's house and brought two children with her whom she loved and took extremely good care of. The angel inquired of this woman whose children they were. The woman said, "These children are not mine. They are the children of a neighbor of mine who died after giving birth to these twins. The peasants came to me because I had just given birth to a child and I took these twins and nursed them as I did my own child. After three years my own child died. And if it were not for these children, how lonely I would have been."..... Then the angel understood the answer to the third question -- Men can live without father and mother but men cannot live without God.

In this simple story two of the things which men live by are indicated. The first is Love, and the second is Faith. You hear of people speaking of sacred love and profane love, spiritual and physical love. There is very little difference. This is an unreal and artificial distinction. All love is sacred unless it is profaned and desecrated by selfishness, by lust, by excess. There is nothing physical that has not in it the seed of the spiritual. And there is nothing spiritual in the world that does not express itself physically.

God created man out of the dust of the earth and he fashioned him in His image. The love of a man for a woman, the love of a parent for a child, the love of a child for a parent, the love of friends, the love of our fellow men -- these are the things men live by and live for. These are the things men sacrifice for and are exalted by it.

There are two hundred and forty-eight commandments, according to the traditions of our people, two hundred and forty-eight "Mitzvoths". The root of all of these "Mitzvoths", is love. It is love which sends a man out into the world like a warrior to conquer, to master. It is love which comforts, solaces us in our hours of defeat. How often men and women who have suffered much and have passed through the deep waters of life, how often are they sustained by the knowledge of a great love, present or past, living or in memory! How often have I seen men and women who have lost much and endured much say to one another, "We have lost most of our possessions. We have lost most of our dear ones. We have grown old. But we still have each other." It is love which sustains and strengthens men. That is one of the things men live by.

And faith is another. The righteous man lives by his faith. We have got to have faith. We have got to say that life is worthwhile, that human effort is not vain and futile. There is meaning to human aspiration. We have got to have faith, for faith, you know, is the halo which men cast round the heart, the crude, bitter realities of life -- pain suffering and death and the apparent indifference of nature to suffering. Mankind

must place a halo around the brutal facts of life or man could not live. Nature does that.

You sometimes hear of men who suffer eloquently in bringing about a new social order and of men who proclaim that they are atheists, that they do not have any faith. Yet they must have faith or they could not do what they do. They must believe in their own future. They must believe that they are working for the good of all. They must believe in human evolution. And yet all these are unscientific dogmas! They cannot be proved or demonstrated. No one has established the spiritual or social evolution of men. They are all martyrs of faith and offer themselves as martyrs to a cause. Men do not become martyrs to a cause because of their knowledge or wisdom, but out of a great faith. Faith, that is the second thing men live by.

The third thing men live by is work. There are two types of work, the work which we do in order to sustain ourselves -- the planning, the building -- and the work we do in order to express ourselves, -- to give vent to the inner potentialities of his life, to the inner urge, to express something which within us cries for expression.

Now work may sometimes become a curse when it turns into drudgery. But no drudgery is so great a curse as the curse of having nothing to do in the world. Everything that lives has something to do in the world. That is a function of life. Man wants to do something because a man wants to master something. A man wants to create, to contribute something to the little world to which he knows he is important, significant. That

is achieving something. How humiliating it is for a human being who cannot provide for his home, a man who cannot work who cannot achieve something. And I believe that the greatest curse of our technocracy today is that it consigns so many persons to enforced idleness, to homelessness in a world which cries for action, thereby breaking their spirit and undermining their morale. That is the menace of prolonged unemployment. It makes no difference what work a man does, manual or mental, skilled or unskilled, it is important that he has work to do.

Masaryk once said -- the great President of the Republic of Czechoslovakia -- "All honest workers are equals and a good blacksmith is no less admirable than a good president." He knew because he was both.

And so the third thing which men live by is work, having something to do in the world -- making one's way in the world -- contributing to the world -- creating in the world. The greatest punishment which can be inflicted to a prisoner is to be put in solitary confinement where he has no work, because every fibre of the human body cries for the opportunity to do something, to work.

Lastly, I believe, one of the things we live by is the hope of recognition, of being honored by our fellow men. The hope of being respected. Men want recognition. Men want to be praised, whether it is a cobbler who makes a pair of boots or an artist who paints a great picture or writes a marvelous symphony. We all want to be admired. We all want to be honored by our fellow men.

"A good name is better than precious oil. A good name is to be preferred to great wealth." There are many people in the world who prefer a good

name among their fellow men, to be loved, respected by their fellow men to great wealth. It is not an unworthy motive in life to desire to be recognized unless it becomes a passion. For it is a normal desire for a human being to want to be respected, to be recognized, to be praised. That is one of the things men live by. Whether it is the hero on the battlefield, or the writer who is writing a book or the artisan fashioning some article. These are the things men live by -- Love, faith, work, honor.

We do not choose them. They choose us. We are their prisoners. There is a phrase in the Bible: "The prisoner of hope." We are the prisoners not merely of hope. We are the prisoners of work, love, faith and honor. But in these prison houses, if you will, we are truly free.



1. Person - "persona" - a mask, worn by actors -

✓ We all wear masks - Real feelings are hidden. Real motives not disclosed -

✓ ① pari nari pibai pibai 's -

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✓ ② l, li z b, si p b z z k - "Every man walketh in an image"

✓ ③ Interesting Midrash in Gen. 1 - "There is not an ace of ground in the world that is not filled with ¹⁰⁰⁰ spirits - harmful spirits - and each spirit has a mask before its face - lest man look upon its true image and be harmed" -

✓ The whole of nature is masked - and man sees only that which human eyes ~~are~~ allowed to see.

2. Hence in judging men - we are frequently admonished not to go by the sight of an eye - by outward appearances - by acts only - or manners only - probe into heart - why?

✓ ① Charity ② public opinion - fear of death - leave it to relatives - wants praise - no sacrifice. ③ Others - love - pity - sacrificially -

✓ ② Sin -

✓ ③ How many and varied + confused are the motives who can probe the mysteries, the human heart

3. Nevertheless there are a few elemental, basic motives which are common to all men - the major dynamics of most, the significant actions of human beings.

1. The Things Men Live By. - The things men live for -
the permanent "appetites" of men - the things
which may be called "passions" - ^{"passions"} suffer if
they do not possess them

4 - Tolstoi - "What Men Live By."

An angel had disobeyed God. Lord sent him to
bring back soul of a certain woman. Flew down
to earth - woman lying alone - sick - she had just
borne twins - 2 little girls - Mother saw him -
burst into tears - I have just buried my husband -
killed by a falling tree - I have no birth or life -
no one to talk to, no my little ones - do not carry
off my soul - let me bring up my children + nurse
them + put them in their feet - "It is impossible
to live without father or mother"

Angel flew back to the Lord: "I cannot take
the mother's soul" - It is impossible for children
to live without father and mother"

And the Lord said

"Go and take the mother's soul, + thou shalt
learn 3 lessons

✓ (1) What is in men

✓ (2) What is not given unto men

✓ (3) What men live by

And his wings fell from him - and he fell to earth - And he became a man - naked in the cold winter

① And a poor peasant - on their garment - clothed him - and took him to his hut - and fed him - He knew the answer to just what is in men's soul!

② And he soon learned - from a rich man - a baron - a leather pair of boots - that when the gear is gone they won't have got out of shape or ripped - If boots wear out before gear - will have them looked up - 10 rubles

As he left - he forgot to stop - and struck his head against the lintel - He was dead before he ~~reached~~ his slough reached home - slippers for the corpse

"What is not given unto men". / It is not given unto men to know what is needed for their Brother -

③ Answer to 3rd question. Into Collier's shop - came woman - 2 children - helpless - only woman who had a baby - peasant got together & asked her to take care of babies for a little while - nursed all 3 - when her boy was in her 3rd year - she lost

him - How lovely it would have been if it
were not for these 2 little girls.

Answer - What men live by!

✓ "Men can live without father & mother - but
without God we cannot live"

5- Two, the Things Men live by.

① Love ② Faith.

① Men speak of Sacred and Profane Love of Physical
and spiritual - An unnatural and artificial
distinction. All love is sacred if it is not
profaned - desecrated by lust or selfishness.

✓ There is nothing physical that has not in it
the seed, the spiritual. There is nothing
spiritual that does not express itself in the
physical.

✓ God created man out of the dust - but
fashioned him in the image of God.

② ✓ The love of a man for a woman - of a parent
for a child - of a child for a parent - & the
love of friends - the love of our fellowmen -
these ~~are~~ are one of the things men live
for - hunger for - aspiration for - as exacted
by it. Triumph through it -

③ How often men ~~remember~~ who have suffered - are sustained by the knowledge, a great love - present or past - ~~in fact~~ ^{in truth} or in memory -
✓ - we still have each other!...

② Faith. Men live by Faith! - 21171 Y. 11/12 p135.

✓ ① Men must believe! that life is worth while, that work is not vain & futile, that struggle and aspiration are not vanity.

✓ ② Italo! around pain - suffering - death - apparent indifference, indifference to man's struggles & sufferings

✓ ③ Those who struggle for new social order - Even when they call for atheism - which is progress - in future, ^{evolutionary process} ~~invariant~~ - These are all unsacred dogmas! Only mechanical progress

✓ ④ Faith is beyond reason - above reason - Men do not become martyrs out of wisdom but out of faith -

6. ^{3rd} Work. 2 types of work -

① Work which a man must perform to sustain himself - plant - weave -

② Work which a man must do to express himself - to exercise his talents

- ✓ ① Work may become a curse if it is dudgy but no dudgy is as great a curse as having nothing in the world to do.
- ✓ ② Every thing that lives has work to do and fulfils itself thru work.
- ✓ ③ Man wants to master something - to fashion and create something. It expresses him - and makes him feel that he counts for something - that in his ^{-in his kingdom} sphere he is important.
- ✓ ④ How humiliated men feel when they can't provide for their families! - A job provider is a destruction!
- ✓ ⑤ The curse of our present tech. civlty. causes so many to enforce idleness - breaks their pride - destroys their morale.
- ⑥ It makes no diff. what work - mental or manual - skilled or unskilled - (Inst)

7. By the ^{Honor} hope of being - honored - respected by their fellow men -

- ① Men want recognition - want to be liked - praised - admired - loved - His handiwork praised -
- ✓ ② - 216 pl. 216 pl 216 -
- 27 24'11 pl 27 22J -

(3) It is an unworthy motif unless it becomes
extreme - & false - a passion for acclaim or publicity

~~(4)~~

8. There are the motives - the consecrations - by which
men live - Love - Faith - Work - Honor -

We do not choose them. They choose us -
we are their prisoners - and in these
prisons we are truly free.



"All honest workers are equal, and
a good black smith is no less admirable
than a good president"

- Masaryk -
who was both

