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Memorial Day 1935, 1935.

MEMORIAL DAY - 1935

Delivered By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
At
The Temple
On

Sunday morning, May 26, 1935.



My dear Friends: This Memorial Day is set aside to pay tribute to the memory of the dead in the great tragic Civil War which for long years ravaged their lands. It is well to pause and pay tribute to those who made the supreme sacrifice when their country in its hour of need suffered. They gave their fullest measure of devotion to a cause in which they believed. Both the men of the North and the men of the South at the behest of patriotism laid down their lives -- close up to a half million of men in the Blue and the Gray. And our nation can do no less, I am sure, than to pay tribute, an affectionate tribute, to these men and to the survivors of the fading ranks of the armies who clashed in this bitter struggle. That Civil War might, perhaps, been averted if men had possessed greater wisdom, greater justice and less selfishness in those days.

On Memorial Day there are many thoughts that go through one's mind. Perhaps the foremost of these is this -- the operation of the moral law in the history of men. That very austere and solemn though unpalatable truth -- the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children of the third and fourth generations of those that hate me.

In 1619, John Rolfe, the man who married Pocahontas, wrote in his diary: "About the last of August came in a Dutch man of warre that sold us 20 negars". That was the beginning of slavery in the United States. And with the selling of these twenty slaves there was created a continuing and every growing menacing problem for the American people which for nearly 250 years afflicted the life of this nation, dominated

the best minds and intellects, seeking a solution which could not be found. For 250 years the American people tolerated the institution of slavery. Cotton had made the slave an economically desirable individual. And the people of this country, particularly the people of the South, were content to grow rich, to build a fine culture for themselves and their children from the backs of hundreds of slaves. By 1861, one-eighth of the population of the country were slaves. Human beings were brutally exploited in order to create ease and comfort for other individuals. Some men were content to "wring bread from the sweat of other men's faces." But there is a moral law in the universe which operates irresistibly, implacably and although it is sometimes slow in operation, it ultimately punishes the evil doers and rewards the doers of righteousness. "The wealth piled up by the bondsmen's 250 years of unrequited toil had to be sunk -- And every drop of blood drawn with the lash had to be paid for by another drawn with the soul." White men killed white men in atonement for sins which white men had committed against black men. And that is the moral law of the universe. For the eternal moral laws cannot be violated with impunity. The Negroes in the United States dared to fight for their emancipation. White men fought for it. All the iniquities of slavery, the violation of social law in the course of time created such an economic

that the emancipation of the negro became inevitable

but inevitable only through a bloody Civil War which achieved what reason, and human justice could not achieve.

The problem which was created for our nation by the violation of a moral law plagued our nation for two and a half centuries and even the

Civil War did not solve that problem completely. While negroes fought for political emancipation, for economic and social culture,--that is yet to be achieved--and it will take generations of racial conflict, generations of slow and painful adjustment and it will take the best minds among the white and colored folk in this land to find a just way of living between these races in our land.

(sins of fathers visited on children unto third and fourth generation)

That is a lesson that may well be stressed on Memorial Day to bring back to our minds those who were ready to offer their lives to rectify a wrong not of their own doing, but for a wrong which had to be stamped out before the nation could continue to live as a free and unified people.

This brings to my mind, this Memorial Day, the vicious men in 1935 -- in a country like Germany -- what they are doing and how they are creating problems for their people which their people will have to atone for in years to come. A great social iniquity, the trampling under foot of a great human principle of justice. The Nazis in Germany are victimizing today a people and are subjecting that people to many of the disabilities the iniquities which the colored men were subjected to in our country until the time of the Civil War.

This time it is the Jew who is being victimized, politically disfranchised, culturally isolated, denied his elementary human rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness and the sins of these vicious and maddened Nazis are even greater than the sins which we committed knowingly and unknowingly against the colored folk before the Civil War. The American people were ^{not} the first to initiate it. They

were the last to abolish it, it is true. When slavery was introduced in this country, it was legalized. The American people never denied free citizens of their rights. But in Germany, in 1935, people who lived there for a thousand years or more, who enjoyed the rights of citizenship, who performed their obligations of citizens to the best and the fullest of their ability, who served their country in peace and in war, people who shared their culture and intellectual life to a higher degree than the rest of the people, were suddenly, over night, deprived, stripped of their rights of citizenship, denied the right to participate in ^{the} political life of the country, denied opportunities of education, torn from their careers, humiliated, degraded and even though not reduced to the position of chattle slaves, they were denied the elementary rights of slaves which we regard as the very breath of life and the essence of living.

They are laying up problems for their country quite as serious as the slave problem was for their people. Such an act of infamy, such an act of wrong cannot go unpunished. The longer it lasts, the more terrible must be the day of reckoning. In modern times great nations cannot suddenly resort to brutal intolerance backed by forced dictatorship without bringing disaster upon itself. Already, within Germany itself, the agitation has become apparent among the churchmen, the men of faith, the men of spirit and many of them have already been persecuted and subjected to martyrdom because of their refusal to submit to the _____ of the State. And the battle line is to be extended in years to come. Nazis who have created a ruthless national immoral act in the world ~~and~~ have laid up for their people a Civil War which must come sooner or later in that harassed land. And so it is important on Memorial Day that we think of

these fundamental moral principles which, if violated, lead to war and to disaster.

I think that we would miss the entire significance of Memorial Day, my friends, if we would not think, this morning of the one lesson which all war points out -- the lesson of peace. I have nothing but the highest reverence for soldiers who die on the battlefield. They exhibit those qualities of courage, sacrificial loyalty which mankind will always need.

On the other hand, the fact that wars are necessary is the most terrible indictment of the inadequacy of the spiritual and intellectual resources of mankind. That wars are necessary indicates that mankind is only one step removed from the habits and the emotional reflexes of the jungleland. That nations cannot solve international issues except by resorting to machine guns and poison gas and the bombardment of civilian population is the most tragic revelation of the insufficiency of our civilization, of our proximity to barbarism.

You war veterans who have served your country so well in its hour of need, ought to feel on Memorial Day, as I feel -- that your greatest challenge from now on is to devote yourself to the cause of peace. No intelligent man who has been through a war or who has seen was as you saw it -- as I saw it -- no intelligent man who has seen the horrors of war, the waste of human life, the destruction of substance and wealth, the sorrows let loose upon the habitations of man -- no intelligent man can be anything else but the sworn foe of the whole institution and system of war. All that we suffer from today -- the depression, the unemployment of millions of people, the impoverishment of

the world, the obsessions of our day -- Fascism, Naziism, Bolshevism, the rise of anti-Semitism and the hate which have swept over the world are all to be traced directly to the World War. And the wrong committed in the years 1914-1918 your children and your children's children will have to atone for.

Yet in spite of this fact clear to every thinking man -- the stupidity of war and that war solves no problems -- in spite of this fact, today, seventeen years after the Armistice, there are whole nations again glorifying war. The youth of the whole world are again being indoctrinated with not only the inevitability of the next war, the splendor of war, but that the soldier's career, the soldier's profession is the noblest professional career in the world. To die on the battlefield -- that represents the supreme achievement. I have seen the young people in uniform marching, marching, marching, chanting war hymns, preparing themselves for a holocaust of the next World War which they have been told will be fought.

We Jewish members of the race always hated war,--a race that knew how to fight when confronted by war, a people who had always served loyally in all the countries in the world because when their nation was at war, they regarded it as the obligation of citizenship to respond to the call to arms. But please do not forget that our race has always abhorred war and that the prophets of this people visioned the day when we "will beat our swords into ploughshares and when nations will not learn war anymore."

You people must never look upon death on the battlefield as being any nobler than death in the service of one's country and of one's people or of mankind in peace time. So on this Memorial Day of 1935, I appeal to you veterans who know how to fight, to turn your fighting ability to strength

of character to fight war, the whole system of war, the whole psychology of war. See to it that those institutions which mankind has already built up for the peace of mankind are supported. See to it that this nation shall not at any time be stampeded into a war mood, that we shall insist upon exploiting every avenue of peace before we resort to war. There is a World Court. There is a League of Nations.

You veterans of the World War or of former wars, in the name of our sacred duty, help to strengthen these institutions and to hold sacred the covenants of peace so that mankind will be safe in the days to come from these horrors of war, so that your children and those who come after them will not have to lay wreaths and tributes upon the graves of those who died in battle.

We will have a Memorial Day, a beautiful Memorial Day and those who come after us will ^{pay} their respects and tokens of love to those who have given their lives to the best of their ability in the laboratories, in the school room, in the halls of legislation, in the shop, in the factory, in the office, on the platform -- the rich, the nobler life of their nation and who bring great light into the habitations of the world. This, to my mind, is one of the supreme lessons of Memorial Day.

"The wealth piled up by the bondsmen's 250
years of unrequited toil had to be sunk -
and every drop of blood drawn with the
lash had to be paid for by another drawn with the same."

White men killed white men for sins which
The black man did not have to fight -
pp 11 3 -

Outraged moral law

3. No did war solve the problem - Pol. union.
It will take generations & conquest
The 10 m. colored - social problem
Thus a nation's loss - for a wrong liberates

4. The main men of Germany - 1935
are creating just such a race problem
This time it is Jew - outraged - econ.
disabled - culturally isolated -

The sins Nazis ever practices -
slavery in U.S. by an - we are not going to introduce

1/ This day set aside to recall - the dead of
It is well to pay tribute - made the
they gave - to a cause - believed
at the behest of patriotism - they died honorably
close to $\frac{1}{2}$
Our nation can do no less - brave soldiers -
clashed -

2/ Many thoughts -
- the inplacable operations = Sins of fathers
✓ In 1619 - John Rolfe - Powhatan -
"About the last of August came in a
Dutch man of war that sold us 20 negroes"
✓ This was beginning - From that day -
1861 - growing
250 - tolerated
cotton -
to grow rich - $\frac{1}{8}$ of population.
Human beings were brutally -
"Wring bread from the sweat, other men's faces"
but the eternal moral laws

7/. Challenge to you - Veterans -
No intelligent man - foe.

8/. Last war responsible for all our
~~misfortunes~~ - Depression -
All the present insecurity

9/. Yet in spite, plunder was
going on

10/. We just hate war! Fight well -

We do not regard death in battle
TO live - harder - more worthy

11/. Have courage to fight for peace -

Persepolis -

Hortulukas & Peace

12/. In Democracy -

But in modern times - men who had been -
not chattel slaves

5/. This act of infamy - moral wrong -
unpunished -

The long it lasts - laying up

In the modern world - disaster.

German people - crime against humanity

German Church - agitated

Civil War

6/. Sig. 5 Memorial Day lost - Peace
That wars are necessary - to get
short distance from people

Individual heroism on Battlefield
collectors up - resorting - prison
Barbarous future ages

1. Set aside as a day to recall the dead in a great and tragic civil war which for 4 dreadful years ravaged our country.

It is well to pay the tribute of remembrance to those who made the supreme sacrifice when their country summoned them. They gave the fullest measure of devotion to a cause in which they believed in - whether they were, the North or the South. They at the height of patriotism - they died heroically on the battle-field. Close on to a 1/2 m. of Americans perished in the war - in the ranks, the blue and the gray. Our nation can do no less than to honor their ~~memory~~ ^{memory} of their brave soldiers, as well as the last survivors, ~~that struggle~~ in the thinning ranks, the armies ~~which~~ which clashed in that long, bitter struggle which might have been avoided, if men had been wiser, juster and less selfish.

2. Many thro' crowd -

The unplaceable operators, the ~~moral~~ ^{history} ~~even if unpalatable truth~~ ^{the fathers are visited upon the} children with 3-4 generations -



In ~~1619~~ 1619 - John Rolfe, who married Pocahontas, wrote in his diary: "About the last of August came in a Dutch man & was that sold us twenty negars."

This was the beginning of slavery in America. From that day to ~~this~~ 1861 - ~~the~~ slavery never ceased to be a growing & continually more menacing problem in Am. life. For 250 the Am. people tolerated slavery. Cotton made the black slave extremely valuable. The Am. people, especially, the South ever content to grow rich and to build up a fine culture ^{pay themselves} ~~sanctification~~ on the backs of hundreds, thousands of slaves. Human beings were brutally exploited to create ease, comfort and luxury for the human beings. They ^{in many things} ~~were~~ ^{boarded from the sweat of the} ~~unhappy~~ ^{truth} ~~But the eternal moral laws of human society, which they may be~~

Further - Slavery in U.S. began at a time when slavery was still
a necessary institution in the world. The people, however, were not the
first to introduce slavery. They were the last to abandon it in
the West world. And they did not deprive citizens, their
freedom. They ~~continued~~ did not liberate slaves. But
in modern times - men who have lived there as free men with
same rights - same degree of education - same if not
higher intelligence, attainment - have been suddenly by passage
of laws deprived etc. degraded - and the old mode slave
has nevertheless been deprived of most of the rights of free
men - to show in fact - which even the common slave in the
U.S. now enjoy - the right to practice their professions,
to gain an education - the rights of citizenship. They are
not chattel slaves - they are men who have lost the privilege
of free men in the modern state -

5 - This act of infamy - this moral wrong - will also not
go unpunished. The day is not far - the more terrible will be the
punishment - The Nazis are laying up for themselves a terrible day
of reckoning. In the modern world such high-handed acts of
intolerance, bigotry & racial hatred & persecution backed up by force
& terror & dictatorship - must lead to national disaster. The
Germans themselves will some day have to atone for this
crime against humanity. The free Church is already
being awakened etc. this crime will not be hidden. The
battle-line will be extended. The Nazis are preparing

And war for these people.

6- Sq. & this day aimed to entirely last if it did not turn out
thats from war to peace. That war are necessary is
a tragic commentary on man's immaturity - on his lack
of ability to solve great issues by many, intelligent - on
the unintelligence of our intell. & sp. resources; It points to
just - ~~that~~ only short way from the jungle - its habits
of ~~that~~ and responses - its emotional reflexes.

And heroism on the battlefield may be something - to call
forth our admiration - for greatness & courage & so on. will
always be needed by mankind. But the collective
urge to war - the part I was staying of what is really
to murder men - permanently harm to settle an inter-
dispute is the most disgusting manifestation
of our barbarism imaginable - the things which will
make future ages shudder at our stupidity &
brutality even more than the repulsion does now -
on the sacrificial human beings as accountants - a
canonization.

7- The challenge to you - Veterans - is to make that I was
hateful... to look jaundiced to causing war.

No intell. man who has been thru a war - seen the
honors - its tragic waste of human life - & resources - can
do anything else but the reason for, was unintentional

Sermon 436

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE, ANSEL ROAD
AND EAST 105th STREET ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 26.

MEMORIAL DAY - 1935

Our nation can do no less than to pay honor to the brave soldiers and to the last survivors of those armies which clashed in the great Civil War which might have been averted if greater wisdom and a higher sense of justice had prevailed.

One of the great lessons which Memorial Day points to is the implacable operation of the moral law in the life of nations as of individuals. "About the last of August," wrote John Rolfe, in 1619, "came in a Dutch man of warre that sold us twenty negars." That was the beginning of slavery in the United States, and from that day until 1861 it became a growing and increasingly more menacing problem in the life of the American people. For two hundred and fifty years our people were content to tolerate the institution of slavery, to grow rich and to build up a fine culture on the backs of hundreds of thousands of slaves. Human beings were exploited to provide every comfort and luxury for other human beings, to "wring bread from the sweat of other men's faces."

But the eternal moral laws cannot be violated with impunity. "The wealth piled up by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil had to be sunk -- and every drop of blood drawn with the lash had to be paid for by another drawn with the sword." White men killed white men for the sins which white men committed against black men. An outraged moral law took its toll in a bloody Civil War. And even the Civil War did not completely solve the negro problem which centuries of abuse, discrimination and segregation created. It will take generations of painful adjustment and the best leadership among the white and the colored people to undo the mischief of former generations.

The significance of Memorial Day would be entirely lost unless it led soldiers and civilians alike to thoughts of peace. Individual heroism on the battlefield may justly evoke our respect and admiration, for mankind will always

value acts of courage and sacrificial loyalty. But the collective urge to war, the very fact of war, the sheer stupidity of nations resorting to machine guns, and poison gas and mass murder, to solve international issues, is an indication of how little we have advanced beyond the jungle stage and how tragically inadequate our intellect and spiritual resources still are.

No intelligent veteran who saw war with his own eyes, the tragic waste of human life and human resources, can be anything else but a relentless foe of the whole war system. All that the Western world suffers today -- Fascism, Naziism, Bolshevism, unemployment, depression, fear -- are directly traceable to the last war. And yet there are nations today who are glorifying war and befuddling their youth with war romanticism.

You veterans should be in the vanguard of those who fight for peace, for the strengthening of those international institutions which have already been built up for the peace, settlement of international disputes, for faithful observance of the international covenants to outlaw war. You should be on the alert to guard your people against the war psychosis, the stampede to arms when tense situations develop between our nation and others.

Some day we will observe beautiful Memorial Days in tribute to the dead who in the classrooms, legislative halls, shops and factories served their country in faithfulness and devotion by creating those values which are for the good of all and the hurt of none -- values which enrich and ennoble the life of the nation.