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157

Box
56

Folder
525

Suffering - and its Harsh Ministry, 1937.

475
SUFFERING - AND ITS HARSH MINISTRY
"Wherefore is life given unto the bitter in Soul?"

WRHS
By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
At
The Temple



On
Sunday morning, February 28, 1937

1st in series on PROBLEMS OF HUMAN LIFE REFLECTED IN THE BIBLE

The Bible, my friends, is a true mirror of life. All of the human experiences, problems, moods, are reflected in it - not only reflected ^{but} ~~and~~ distilled, ~~but~~ analyzed, evaluated. "All the rivers run into the sea but the sea is never full" - that is the Bible.

Men throughout the ages have turned to this book for enlightenment, comfort, ~~for~~ inspiration. They are doing it, ~~too~~, ^{to} this very day. The Bible is still the best seller in the world's literature. It is not the book of the day or the book of the month but the book of ^{the} ages. The fact that in modern times this book has been found to be a supremely human document, the creation of man inspired by God, the work of not ^a one man, ^{or} one age, ^{or} the product of one place - does not diminish the importance of the book or books but rather enhances it.

Man has recorded in this testament the story of his suffering, struggling, aspiring life, all ~~these~~ ^{the} sorrows, all ~~these~~ ^{the} burdens, all ~~these~~ ^{the} failures, all ~~these~~ ^{the} triumphs. Truly the book is the spiritual Odyssey of the human race.

Men have quarrelled about this book and from time to time have attacked it. Sometimes the attackers were friends of mankind and lovers of freedom who, impatient with the oppression, ^{and} the exploitation of a church which monopolized the Bible and quoted it as authority for its acts of exploitation and enslavement - ~~they~~ ^{we} believe ~~these friends of mankind~~ endeavored to attack these organized religious bodies by attacking the Bible on which their authority seemed to be based. At other times it was the reactionaries and enemies who attacked the Bible, like the Nazis today, ^{for they} ~~who~~ are opposed to the ideals contained therein - the ideals of freedom, social justice,

economic equality + Also because it is the product of the genius of the Jews. But the Bible, like an impregnable fortress, like the Rock of Gibraltar, has withstood all the attacks of men, the tests of time, the changing cycles of civilization, the ^{toolt}~~truth~~ and rasure of oblivion. It is still the most vital, illuminating and challenging book of the human race.

Whatever a man has thought or felt about things basic, elemental, is recorded in this ever-fresh, human document and the ⁱⁿ form/which these ideas are expressed, the very literary style is unexcelled and matchless in the whole literature of mankind. For many of the writers of the Bible were not only thinkers but great artists. They possessed the gift of combining "three words to get not a fourth, but a star," so that as you read the Bible, you find pages of such matchless beauty, exquisite beauty as to move you to tears.

One of the universal data of human experience is suffering. "There is no man without suffering." What human heart is there that has not known its grief, its wrongs, its pains, its sorrow and its despair. From birth till death, (from the cradle to the grave,) man is never immune from the onslaught of physical, mental and spiritual suffering, so much so that many people in all ages have come to believe that the evils of life are far in excess of the good things of life and that, therefore, life itself, is evil and human existence is inherently bad and that man should strive to master ⁱⁿ~~him~~ himself the desire for existence. Human suffering is the basis of the attitude of mind which we call pessimism which, by the way, forms one of the cardinal thoughts of a great religion, the religion of Buddhism.

How is suffering envisaged in this book? What has the Bible to say about it? What word of comfort has the Bible to offer to the suffering? What light does it bring to those who walk in darkness? As you may well surmise, there is hardly a book of the Bible which does not in some form or another, whether in the form of a story or narrative, or condensed proverb, or forthright philosophic discussion - there is hardly a book in the twenty-four books of the Bible, which does not treat abundantly ^{of this} ~~with~~ great inescapable fact of human existence - suffering.

Of course, not all evils of life are grouped under one heading because not all evils present the same problems and lend themselves to the same solution. There are all kinds of evil. The authors of the Bible take pains to point out the distinction in the evils which afflict humanity. There are evils productive of suffering which are of man's own making - suffering which man brings on himself, not at all inevitable, not at all inescapable. Man hasn't the right to absolve himself of the responsibility for them or shift the blame upon God. Man invites these evils by his own volition. Man can escape these evils by his own preference.

One of the marvelous things about the Bible is that it does not coddle man. It treats him as a man. It recognizes the limitations under which man lives, restrictions which, in a sense, constrict man's independence and therefore man's responsibility. It is also aware, *however*, and is insistent upon that large measure of freedom, independence and moral choice ~~which~~ which a wise providence allowed the individual.

If, for example, a man through jealousy, through envy, through lust for power, money, influence, through an insatiable ambition, through greed, through excesses of all kinds, through gluttonness and drunkenness, hate, envy, through intemperance, intemperate spirit, creates for himself bitterness, enemies, suffering, disease, poverty - these are man's own doings. And the cure for these things is man's own. He must repent. He must reform. He must take hold of himself and set for himself higher and nobler interests.

In story after story, the Bible points out the tragic suffering which human beings bring upon themselves by the hardness and stubbornness of their own hearts. Thus, for example, over and over again, the lesson is brought home by the teachers of the Bible - how much of suffering and jealousy come into the habitations of men, how men are turned into beasts, how men are yielded up to infamy, lying and deception - even to murder - when driven by the passions of envy and jealousy.

~~In~~ The stories of Cain and Abel, ^{Jacob}~~Joseph~~ and Esau, Saul and David, ~~you have them~~ ^{are} written into the Sacred Writ for the purpose of driving home the moral lesson of how the demon of jealousy, envy caused Cain to murder Abel; caused Joseph to be sold as a slave in Egypt; and caused King Saul ^{to} become a morose and melancholy plotter bent upon the destruction of another man. "Jealousy is a rottenness of the bone of man."

Thus, for example, you have that tender and pathetic story of Absalom and his ^{father} King David in which the lesson is brought home of how much suffering is produced by a man's unquenchable ambition. The beautiful and beloved Absalom rebels against ~~the~~ ~~insatiable ambition~~ of his father which leads to his own death and

to the old King David, beaten and broken, going through the rest of his declining years of life crying "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son."...

And so throughout the books of the Bible one is taught how luxury undermines and destroys, how lust corrupts, how hatred ~~engenders~~ ^{engenders} ~~encounters~~ strife, how the pursuit of vanity leads to disillusionment.

These evils of mankind constitute most of the sufferings of mankind and are man-made. The wise man who suffers as a result of these vices will learn how to reform himself through his many sufferings, just as Jacob after many years of exile and privation returned a sadder and wiser man - ~~became~~ ^{became} a new man, with a new conception of life; just as Joseph as a result of years of suffering ~~became~~ ^{became} an understanding ^{and} forgiving benefactor of mankind.

This is the first category of the sufferings of man which are man-made and curable by man.

Secondly, there are the evils which we do to one another, the evils which come to us because of ^{the} wickedness ^{of others}, through cruelty and dishonesty, the evils which befall us because we are members of society, ~~following~~ invasion, exploitation, enforced poverty, perversion of justice and tyranny. These manifold evils also bring terror into the lives of men. They, too, are amply illustrated in the Bible. They, too, are looked upon as avoidable because they, too, are man-made. Therefore the Bible, over and over again, challenges man not to yield himself up to social evils, not to accept them as inevitable in the scheme of things, to fight them, to endeavor to destroy them. Therefore, you have these endless appeals in the Bible to ~~illustrate~~ man's sense of social justice, in place of ~~his~~ ^{his}

primitive instinct. There is the doctrine "I am my brother's keeper", "Thou shalt not hate thy brother", and "Justice, justice, shalt thou pursue."

These evils which afflict mankind - ^{think of the one} let loose in our own day ~~by one evil~~ ^{the} World War - these evils are man-made and can be unmade. Our Bible points out that it is in ^{man's} ~~his~~ power to build ^a social order which can be free of all that mars life today, that man has in his power, if so he wills, if so he strives, to build for himself ^{perfect} a kingdom on earth wherein "every man shall live under his vine and ~~under~~ ^{his} fig tree and none to make him afraid."

And finally there is ^{or} ~~the~~ third category of evil which, in a sense, is inescapable, inherent in the very nature of human existence, beyond the control of man - to a large degree - sickness, ~~and~~ physical handicaps and tragic accidents and the loss of dear ones and death. These are largely and some of them are altogether beyond our control and these sufferings seem to have no moral warrant and no justification or purpose. They befall the good and the wicked alike. The saint and sinner ~~seem~~ to share alike. They make no distinction. Sometimes the righteous seem to suffer more than the unrighteous. This has led men to question the justice of God. That, you will recall, was the theme of the book which Maimonides called "The strange and wonderful book of Job." This is the subject of the marvellous Psalm 73 which I read this morning. This was also the motif of the story of the Serpent and the Tree of Knowledge which is in the Book of Genesis.

Some have sought to resolve this difficulty by saying that God is not Omnipotent, that there is a principle of evil and

a principle of ^{Good}~~God~~ and that the principle of evil resists and thwarts the principle of ^{Good}~~God~~; Others have sought to resolve the difficulty by saying that evil is only an illusion of mortal life, or that it is a delusion of the mortal mind. This latter does not make suffering any less painful or real and death is still death. The former, of course, is not acceptable to a faith that proclaimed the unity of God and whose central tenet was "one God", who created good and also evil.

After all is said and done there is really no answer to the problem other than that which was made to Job, namely, that ~~there~~^{it} is a profound and insoluble mystery, quite as mysterious as nature itself, ~~the struggle for existence~~. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" One must believe that evil is part of this unfathomable design of the wise and the powerful creator and he who believes, ^{and} trusts this Creator, trusts ~~his~~ plan and trusts ~~his~~ management of the world will and can endure whatever life brings to him with fortitude and valiant spirit. The man who believes, my friends, who surrenders completely to the sovereignty of this God, in so doing, ^{is sustained by the thought} ~~gets the confidence~~ that there is a God in the world and that things cannot be utterly, irrevocably, permanently evil. He believes that God has ordained His world as He willed ^{to} and that man was created exactly as He wished him to be created - finite and not infinite, full of imperfections, surrounded with a multitude of evils and afflictions but capable of mastering most of them. That is how God wanted man to be. By and through his very handicaps and disabilities man serves God's purpose and fulfills God's program and at the same time lives his own life.

The man who believes does not look upon suffering, when it comes to him, as punishment. Suffering is not always proof of evil action on the part of man. When a man suffers it is no proof that he is being punished. Suffering is as

much a fact as joy, as the food we eat, as the air we breathe. It is one of the data of human existence. And the believer, and the wise man of faith, endeavors to use his triumphs and tribulations so as to bring him nearer to God. Every sorrow then becomes a deeper drilling into the spiritual layers of ~~every~~ personality. From his own broken heart man learns to understand the sufferings and afflictions of other men. His own tears make him wish to spare the tears of other men. That is how the wise man faces the mystery of suffering in the world. He believes that God intended that man should be disciplined by the rigors of adversity. Trials and suffering, if not too overwhelming, strengthen, ennoble the human being. He who believes in God will come to understand what the Rabbis meant when they spoke of the "chastisement of love". He will come to understand ^{what} the Bible meant when it says "Him whom the Lord loveth, he chastiseth just as a father, ~~as~~ a child in whom he delights." Blessed is the man whom the Lord chastiseth." That is an amazing philosophy, my friends...

One who has known God by groping for him, one who has reached out for Him with all the fibers of his soul will understand the relationship between the creator and the created - of the father and the son.

Such a man will therefore become reconciled to that inescapable measure of suffering which is the lot of everyone, and having found refuge in God, will find everything that befalls him easier to bear, and the prosperity of the wicked will not bother him any more. And that is the blessing of the marvelous Psalm 73. At the first the Psalmist was conscious and troubled. He saw the righteous suffering. 'What God is there? Look at the sinners, the exploiters of the world. That he said was only when ^I was blind. But as soon as ^I entered the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, as soon as I understood the mysteries of the relationship which exists between man and

God, I realized how foolish I had been....

I have nothing in the world, but I have everything. I seek the nearness of God. And God is near to all who call upon him. Whether the road is hard or smooth, I have God and God is near to all who call upon him. Whether the road is hard or smooth, I have God, and the consciousness of God's presence around me is like a sun in my soul.

"Whom have I in heaven but Thee
And beside Thee I desire none upon earth
My flesh and my heart faileth;
But God is the rock of my heart and my portion forever.

Do you understand this, friends. If you do, you can share with this anonymous pilgrim of life, ^{this} reality and ^{this} divine blessedness. Then you are a blessed man, a blessed woman. In seeking God, in trying to worship him and to serve his people, ⁱⁿ trying to be a radiant center of blessed influence around you, ⁱⁿ bringing comfort to others - ^{you make} ~~that makes~~ your own suffering less keen, less sharp.

^{God is}
"He ~~is~~ the rock of my heart and my portion forever."

13:bb- Mirror of life. All human ^{problems} experiences and emotions reflected in it. Does more - reflect - distills. - Analyzes them, evaluates them + prescribes for them. "all the rivers run into the sea - but the sea is never full" - That is the Bible!

Hearts of mankind turned to it - thru the ages - for the great lessons giving - for guidance, sp. correction, ~~and~~ for comfort and inspiration. Still doing it. Still the best seller. Not in the North - ^{Book of the Ages!} But its essential humanity - work out of ^(man - age - place - mood) one etc. etc. has only enhanced its value. It is God-tested & God-fused man reading here faithfully the perplexities, the failures, the struggle as the firmwork of human life. It is the supreme document of man's Odyssey thru life & death.

Men have quarrelled with it - denounced it - attacked it. At times it was friends, mankind and love, human freedom who sought to undermine the power of a reactionary & exploring church, attacked the Book which that church appropriated and dog, whose authority it held sway over men. At other times it was the enemies & reactionaries of mankind - like the present-day Nazis - who attacked the Bible b/c. of its great teaching of social justice, human freedom & brotherhood - or b/c. it was the cracker of the power of the Jew - But like an unrepentable father it has withstood the attacks, even the test of time, the changing cycle of civilization, the tooth & razor of Stalinism.

2. Whatever man has ever thought or felt about things basic ^{elemental} in his destiny - suffering, death, love, etc. are ^{found in} this testament - expressed. Nothing is wanting. ^{But} often the manner & form of the expression - ^{which conveys the idea} - is unequalled and ~~can~~ matchless. To ^{most} the men who wrote the Bible were

not only great thinkers but also great artists. They possessed the
gift, the combining 3 ~~words~~ ^{and} to get out a 4th but a star!
They know not only truth but beauty as well. And beautiful
eloquence as many, the passage, the Bible - so rare and so
freedom a to work on to ears.

2. One of the universal data of human exp. is suffering. 71/11
11/10 11/2 11/11 - What human heart has not known its bitterness,
its pain, its sorrow, its weeping and its despair? From birth till death
from cradle to the grave, men are more or less conscious of the onslaught
of physical or mental or spiritual suffering. So great is the catalogue
of human suffering that ~~some~~ ^{many} people in all ages have ~~concluded~~ ^{concluded}
~~that pain is inevitable in every life~~ ^{that pain is inevitable in every life} ~~and that~~ ^{concluded that} ~~life is essentially evil~~ ^{life is essentially evil} ~~and that~~ ^{concluded that} ~~existence as such~~ ^{existence as such}
is bad, and that the desire for existence should be eradicated. Human
suffering is the basis for that attitude toward a philosophy which we
call pessimism. The great religion of Buddhism has this as its
cardinal principle.

3. How is human suffering envisaged by the writer - student, the
human heart in the Bible? What does the Bible have to say about
the problem of Evil? What word of comfort, what light of guidance
to those lost in the darkness of grief and pain, has ~~the~~ ^{it} to offer?
As you may well imagine, there is an abundance of ~~speculation~~ ^{speculation}
has in the novel world about this subject. I hardly need say, that
which in some form, either in narrative, or exhortation,
or condensed proverb, or forthright philosophic discussion,
does not touch upon this problem.

4. ~~Not~~ ^{Of course} all evils are grouped under one heading and discussed as one. Not all evils present the same problems and lead to same solutions.

There are, e.g. evils, as men making. Suffering which we bring on ourselves - not at all inevitable or inevitable. Man has not the right to absolve himself & exp. for them or shift the blame upon God - Man invites these evils by his own volition. Man can escape the evils by his own preference - The Bible does not coddle man - It does not shelter him & moral up - It treats man always as an adult. It is aware of the limitations ~~and~~ of heredity & environment ~~and~~ which ~~man~~ constant man free freedom, and it is also aware & consistent upon the large measure of moral choice and independence which a wise Providence granted unto him -

If man then envy, jealousy, ^a insatiable ambition, ~~lust~~ ^{thirst} for
wealth and power, then gluttony and drunkenness, then
~~bad and~~ waste, pilfering & shiftness, then hatred and
rascality - fills his life with bitterness, disappointments,
a disease, a poverty of experience - i.e. with suffering
the blame is his - and the cure lies with him. He
must reform! ^{He must} Repent! ~~Be~~ He must take hold of himself
and set about creating his passions, ~~and~~ controlling
his senses, and finding new & nobler interest and
attitude in life -

Suffering is the best thing that can happen to such a man - if it opens his eyes to see himself ~~understand himself~~

II There are evils which are done upon a man - Evils which we do to one another - evils which we suffer here. We belong to a society. There are the sufferings which come from war, invasion, ^{exploitation} enforced poverty, tyranny, ~~persecution~~ ^{justice}, dishonesty, cruelty, & other men -

They too are amply illustrated in Bible. They too are regarded as avoidable, for they are man-made. Bible challenges men not to resign as to them - not to accept them as part of their destiny - to fight them - to destroy them. Hence the passionate appeals for justice, mercy, compassion, charity, brotherly love, peace!

Against the pernicious habit of rapacity in man - the source of so much evil - the Bible sets off - the mandate - "I am my brother's keeper" - 103/17 - "Thou shalt not hate thy brother" - "Justice, justice shalt thou pursue" - Predatory wealth is denounced.

Mankind can free itself of these wrongs and evils. It can enjoy a perfect ^{a perfect kingdom} ~~order~~ ^{order} free of all that mars life to-day - (sit under his vine etc.) if men collectively will strike for it - and make the necessary sacrifices for it.

Cain - ^{accused} murderer - a fugitive & wanderer.

Jacob - exil -

Joseph - slave

Paul - a more & unreluctant plotter of another man's death



Some have sought to resolve this difficulty by saying ^{either} that
God is not omnipotent - that there are dual or plural
powers & principles in the universe - and that the Evil power
resists & thwarts the good which is God. Or - by denying
that evil is not really evil - that it only seems evil to
us - & that it is a delusion of the mortal mind. This
latter does not evade suffering any less ^{real} painful. The
former is of course not acceptable to a faith that
proclaims the unity of God - which it is. —

Q. "When wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Hast thou an arm like God?"
"Seeing I am dust and ashes"

In the world, in spite of all his joys, has as the one good
that is with which having - God - and the warmth of God -
and the comfort temperature of God - while he, ~~possessing~~
all material prosperity, is yet possessed of life's supreme
good - the knowledge, of God - of Truth, of goodness, of Beauty,
these supreme treasures -

Whom have I in heaven but Thee?

And beside Thee I desire none upon earth.

My flesh and my heart faileth;

But God is the rock, my heart and my portion for ever.



and a father - that it is an essential part
the great design of ^{and all powerful} an all-wise Creator - Whom
man's purpose are unapproachable to us -

Those who believe in God trust in His plan and
management of the universe. And they endure
the unendurable hardships of their days with
patience and in valiant faith. They surrender
Eos completely to ^{the} sovereignty of their God. Things seemed
to utterly overwhelm evil, if there is a God ^{+ glorify} God. ^{they}
They do not regard their suffering as punishment - when
they are aware of no sin. They use their trials & tribulations
to ~~as~~ as far as possible for moral improvement. These
men then ^{Every person is a deep suffering into the suffering of the suffering} ^{disappointment} ^{disappointment}
are ^{to} ^{and} the things of God. From their
own broken hearts they learn to understand even intimately the
tragedy of other hearts. Their own tears make them wish to spare
the tears of other men. Even ^{they} ^{are} ⁱⁿ ^{the} ^{regions} ^{of} ^{adversity}
other snow-laden lives. "Fragile ^{the} ^{plants} ^{that} ^{grow} ⁱⁿ ^a ^{sunny} ^{valley}"

The noblest & the most spiritual: came to understand
the Hebrew - what the Bible meant ^{prophets} ^{of} ^{the} ^{Hebrew} ^{Scriptures}
and ^{of} ^{the} ^{Hebrew} ^{Scriptures}

They are reconciled to the measure of suffering inherent in
human life - beyond man's complaining. They find refuge in
God, and find every thing that befalls them easier to bear.
The prospect of the world does not bother him any more

To this question there really is no answer other than Job.

Mystery - no greater than M. of Nature itself -

Struggle for Existence - life + death - growth + decay, belong to all - inherent - It is the Law of Nature! Why?

Man, finite, simply does not know. He did not sit in "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations, the earth?"

Man's reach is not God's -

"Hast thou an arm like God?"

"Dust and ashes" -

One ∴ must have Faith (Reason - better) that Evil is an essential part of Design - of All-wise, All-powerful God - which Design is unfathomable to us.

Those who believe in God - trust Plan Management

And they ∴ endure - forbearance and valiant faith

They surrender Eos completely - unreservedly

Things cannot be utterly and permanently E.

God has ordained that man shall be born, man not God.

By his very finitude + handicaps - fulfils, cooperates - realizes his own destiny -

those who believe - suffering - Purification - not aware of it

They accept it simply as a fact of life, an element,

and try to use it ^{as all other Eos} for self-improvement -

Trials + trib. - help them to draw nearer to God -

Every sorrow is a deeper drilling -

Our own broken hearts help us - Tears - Bonds -

We are conditioned by the rigors of adversity
"Fragile are the plants that grow in a sunny valley"

The noblest + most spiritual come to understand -

וְזָכַרְתָּ לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ
וְזָכַרְתָּ לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ
delighteth correcteth
וְזָכַרְתָּ לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ

They are reconciled to measure of Suffer. inherent -

" find refuge in God and
" everything that befalls is easier to bear.

The Prosperity of the wicked - do they

"Whom have I in heaven but Thee?

"And beside Thee I desire none upon earth.

"My flesh and my heart faileth;

"But God is the rock of my heart, and my portion for ever.

1/ Bible. Mirror - All - & reflect - rivers
Hearts of men turned - Still turning - Best seller - Ages
The fact of its essential humanity - work not of ^{explanation} - Here is a book
wherein tried - recorded faithfully - sublime Odyssey -
Men have quarrelled - But like an impregnable fortress -
Whatever man has ever thought - ancient testament - Form
For most of - 3 words - They knew not only - And b. exquisite

2/ One of the universal data - *for all to see*
What human heart - From birth - So great is the catalogue
H. suffering is the basis - Persecution - Buddhism, Cardinal p.
How is H. suffering envisaged - What does Bible - What word of
As you may well - Hardly a book - which in some form -

3/ Not all Evils are grouped under one heading - discussed as one
" " " present same problem - Solution
- Evils of our own making - Suffering which - ourselves
Not at all inevitable - inescapable
Man has not the right to absolve - shift -
" invites - volition; Man can escape - preference.
Bible does not coddle - adult - Aware of limitations
but also aware + insistent - moral choice, independence
If man then Envy - the blame is his! the cure also!
He must take hold - curb - control - discover new
Thus the Bible tells story after - curse - avoidable vices
In the stories of Cain & Abel - One becomes an accused -
א/כ/כ א/כ/כ א/כ/כ
- In the story of Absalom - insatiable ambition - rebellion -
And so through the Bible - we have vivid - how luxury,
lust and wantonness, hatred, pursuit of vanity,

A persuading that - mounting fever - our failure to control
handing after superfluous, unwillingness to be satisfied.
The resultant suffering may be salutary - if - fast; path

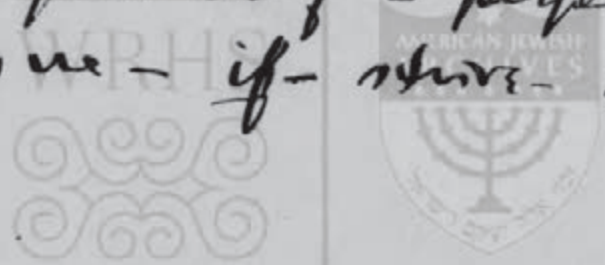
II Evils which we do to one another - society. Cruelty &
dishonesty of other men - War -

These, too, are amely illustrated - Regarded avoidable, bee
man-made.

Bible challenges - not to resign - accept - fight - destroy -
Hence passionate appeals for justice etc.

Against promoters - rapacity - "Brother keepers" - "is it?"
"Thou shalt not hate thy..." "Justice, justice"

Mankind can free itself - perfect order - Kingdom -
- under vine - if - there - sacrifices.



III And, finally, Evils, inherent, inescapable, sickness etc -
these are largely beyond - seem to have no moral warrant
They befall - Make no destruction - Saint - Something the
righteous

This has led men - to question -

✓ Si Deus bonus, unde malum?

- Euripides

This, you will recall, is the great theme - (Marion) Job -
It echoes - Eccle; Subject Marshall Pt. 73 - underlying
motif. True knowledge p. 117

Some have sought to resolve - not omnipotent - dual, plural
revels & thwarts -

Others - Evil is not really E - Seems so to us - a delusion
You not make - less ready -
Foremen - unacceptable - conviction - 1/4 2/1

Dear Friend:

It has been my custom for many years to deliver one series of related lectures each year on some broad human theme—religious, ethical, or historical. I am pleased to announce for this year a new series of seven Sunday morning lectures, beginning on February 28th, on the general theme:

**"PROBLEMS OF HUMAN LIFE REFLECTED
IN THE BIBLE"**

I SUFFERING—AND ITS HARSH MINISTRY

"Wherefore is life given unto the bitter in Soul?"

II DEATH—AND ITS SHADOWING GRACE

"Have the gates of death been opened unto thee?"

III LOVE—AND ITS STRANGE FERMENT

"Love is strong as death."

IV WEALTH—AND ITS TROUBLED STEWARDSHIP

"Riches profit not in the day of wrath."

V WAR—AND ITS ANCIENT MADNESS

"Wisdom is better than weapons of war."

VI HAPPINESS—AND ITS DIFFICULT CONQUEST

"Great peace have they that love Thy law."

VII GOD—AND HIS ENDLESS REVELATION

"To whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

I trust that you and your family will attend these services regularly and hope that you will derive spiritual and intellectual satisfaction from them.

Most cordially,

Abba Hillel Silver

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE, ANSEL ROAD
AND EAST 105TH STREET ON SUNDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 28, 1937

SUFFERING - AND ITS HARSH MINISTRY

The first in a series of seven lectures on "Problems of Human Life
Reflected in the Bible."

Whatever man has ever thought or felt about things basic or elemental in his
destiny - suffering, death, love, happiness, God - are found in that ancient and
ever-fresh testament of human spirit - the Bible. Nothing is wanting. And often
these thoughts and emotions are expressed in a matchless form. For the men who wrote
the Bible were not only great thinkers but also great artists. They knew not only
truth ~~but~~ but beauty. And beatifully exquisite are many of the passages of the Bible,
so rare and so precious as to move one to tears.

One of the universal data of human experience is suffering. So great is the
catalog of human afflictions that many people in all ages have concluded that life
is essentially evil. This is the basis of that attitude of mind which we call
pessimism and is a cardinal principle in the great religion of Buddhism.

How is human suffering envisaged in the Bible? Not all evils are grouped under
one head or discussed as one because not all evils present the same problem or lend
themselves to the same solution.

Bay There are ~~these~~ evils which are of our own making, suffering which we bring
on ourselves. Man has not the right to absolve himself of responsibility for them
or shift the blame to nature, God or destiny. The Bible does not coddle man. It
treats him always as an adult. It is aware of the limitations of heredity and
environment which constrict his freedom. But it is ~~also~~ also aware and insistent upon
the large measure of moral choice and independence which a wise Providence granted
unto him.

If a man through envy, jealousy or insatiable ambition, through cruelty or
self-pampering, through wastefulness and shiftlessness, through hatred and ill-temper
fills his life with bitterness, disappointments, disease, poverty or conflict - with
suffering - the blame is largely his and the cure as well. He must make the effort

to take hold of himself, and to ~~xxx~~ redirect his life to other and nobler interests and attitudes.

There are the evils which we do to one another and those which we suffer because we belong to society, the sorrows which come upon us through the cruelty or dishonesty of other men or through social acts of war, exploitation, enforced poverty, perversion of justice and tyranny. The Bible regards these also as avoidable because they are man-made and it challenges man not to resign himself to them nor to accept them as part of his destiny but to fight them to the utmost. Hence the passionate advocacy throughout the Bible of social justice, mercy, charity, brotherliness, love and peace. Mankind has it within itself to build a social order of justice and peace wherein "every man shall live under his vine and fig tree with none to make him afraid."

Finally there are the evils which are inherent in the order of life itself, the inescapable evils - sickness and bodily pain, physical handicaps, tragic accidents, the loss of dear ones and death. They are largely, if not entirely, beyond the control of men, and these sufferings seem to have no moral justification or purpose. They befall the good and the wicked alike. This has led men through the ages to question the moral order of the universe or the justice of God. Some have sought to resolve this by saying that God is not Omnipotent or by declaring that evil is only a delusion. To this question there is really no answer other than the one given to Job. It is a mystery no greater than the mystery of nature itself. Struggle, pain, life and death, belong to all living things, not merely to man. It is the law of nature. Man simply does not know why. ~~He~~ He did not sit in when God planned ~~xx~~ and created His universe. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?"

Reason can help us very little here. Faith in God leads us to the belief that evil is an essential part of God's design which is unfathomable to us. God has ordained that man shall be born man and not God, finite and not infinite, imperfect

but ~~not~~ perfectible, surrounded by evil but capable of mastering most of these. By his very finitude and through his very handicaps man fulfils God's purpose and realizes his own destiny. Suffering is thus not always punishment. It is a fact in human existence like joy, like the air we breathe and the ~~gammam~~ food we eat. The wise man and the man of faith accordingly uses this fact of human experience for self-improvement. Trials and ~~xxxxx~~ tribulations are so used as to draw them nearer to the heart of reality. Every sorrow is a deeper drilling into the spiritual layers of personality.

Through our own broken hearts, we learn to understand the tragedies of other hearts and our own hot, scalding tears make us wish to spare the tears of other men. The wise ^{man} and the men of faith use the rigors of adversity for spiritual conditioning.



SUFFERING - AND ITS HARSH MINISTRY

by
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver
The Temple - Cleveland, Ohio

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