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Happiness - and its Difficult Conquest, 1937.

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HAPPINESS - AND ITS DIFFICULT CONQUEST
"Great peace have they that love Thy law."

WRHS
By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver
At
The Temple



On
Sunday morning, April 2, 1937

6th in series of lectures on:
PROBLEMS OF HUMAN LIFE REFLECTED IN THE BIBLE

In preparation for this address, the sixth in the series on "Problems of Human Life Reflected in the Bible", we go to the problem of happiness and its difficult conquest. I cast over, in my mind, all the outstanding characters of the Bible and asked myself which one of them may truly be said to have been happy, completely and uninterruptedlly happy. I must confess that I did not fine one. Rather amazing when one stops to reflect. From the original of the race, Adam, right through the whole luminous group of real, vital, full-blooded characters of the Bible, you hardly find one of whom you can really say: 'He was a happy man!'

Adam was driven from Paradise and doomed for the rest of his life to wrest from the hard soil his sustenance by the sweat of his brow. Cain and Abel fought with each other. Abraham, the rabbis said, was subjected to ten vast tribulations during his life. Isaac's life was over-shadowed by the tragedy of a family feud - the feud between his sons, Jacob and Esau. Jacob was compelled to spend the declining years of his life in bitterness. Joseph, too, spent the early years of his life in slavery and in prison. Moses, the richest figure of the Bible, Moses knew all the bitterness of leadership, envy, rebellion, war, conflict. Oft-times Moses cried out: "Good God, I cannot bear it any more!" And he died a lonely man on the top of the mountain overlooking the Promised Land into which he could not enter. The Prophet Samuel's life, too, was shot through with struggle against his own people, against the king. His own sons, we are told in the Bible, were addicted to rivalry, to lust. He died a disappointed man and even in his death he was not allowed to rest in peace. "Why dost thou disturb my rest? the ghost of Samuel said unto the distraught and unhappy Saul. And of Saul, himself - he was

driven through life by an evil spirit, a spirit of melancholia fed by envy and hatred of his young rival, David. David was beset by wars. He was saddened by the death of his beloved son. He was, the rabbis tell us, a man of sin, penitence and suffering.

So, throughout the Bible, almost every character, while not so sorely tried as Job, while not so wracked with pain as Job who went from the heights of prosperity to the depths of agony, nevertheless not one character is altogether free in his life of some defeat, some dismay, of some tragic disappointment. "Man is born to trouble and like the sparks fly upward inevitably."

So, this is the first lesson really which the Bible teaches us about happiness - that it is never continuous, that it is not always present in human life, that this earth is not a Fool's Paradise, that God did not create that kind of a world for men to live in.

The second lesson which the Bible seemed to stress was that there is a large measure of happiness within the reach of man and the degree is largely within the order of man himself. While the Biblical writers do not picture life as a mountain ~~or~~ peak-always bathed in sunshine and in peace - on the other hand they do not picture life as a vale of tears forever wrapped in suffering and gloom.

And here again you have that remarkable sanity and balance which I tried to point out to you in all these lectures that distinguished the writers of the Bible. The sages of the Bible do not disparage life. They do not negate the value of existence or frown upon human happiness. With the exception of Kohelleth who is answered out of his own mouth or by the mouth of a later teacher who edited his work thought it within orthodox or classic Jewish spiritual tradition. The writers of the Bible do not urge men as the other great religions do, to regard the enjoyment of the pleasures of life and the pleasurable sensations of human life as

unworthy of them. "God loves life and light and rejoices in the laughter of his children upon earth." God wants to be worshiped in joy and in happiness and in hearts overflowing with happiness. Hence the author of the Book of Deuteronomy denounces his people because they do not work in joy. He regards it as a sin not to worship God cheerfully and joyously.

Later the Rabbis carried on the same tradition when they said "The spirit of God does not rest upon a man when that man is sad, depressed." There must be a buoyancy of spirit and an uplifting in mood before the spirit of God can descend upon man. What the writers of the Bible looked forward to was a day of such peace, such well-being in the world that all men would be happy. "God will wipe away the tears from all faces." They did not want men to suffer here upon earth in order to lay up for those merits in the world to come.

And the extent of the happiness that is available for mortal men not is/in the willful order of Omnipotent God who says to man - 'You will be happy. You will be sorrowful.' That is largely in the order and achievement of each and every man.

There are numerous suggestions found in the Bible how to find happiness and how to avoid unhappiness and these admonishments have been tested by them and not found wanting. The writers of the Bible my friends are not philosophers and their approach of the whole subject of happiness is not from the metaphysical approach. They do not find a need to ask themselves to debate the subject whether happiness is the only good, the supreme good, whether it is to be gained through social service, etc. There is very little formal philosophy in the Bible but there is much profound wisdom distilled out of human experience and inspired by faith.

They offer to men and to women a code of private and public conduct and a pattern of attitudes which if followed will yield to man and to woman as large a measure of happiness as is possible to attain in this mundane existence. And of some of these I wish to speak this morning.

First I refer to the thought pattern, the frame of mind which one must acquire in order to receive happiness - those things which must be in the soul of man to make for his happiness. It's important for a man to maintain a righteousness of heart. And this righteousness of heart, this proper frame of mind, if you will, comes to a man as a result of his contemplation of the universe, out of the knowledge - the individual knowledge/-
^{of man himself} the racial knowledge, out of knowledge steeped in faith which the writers of the Bible call wisdom - "Chachma". "Blessed, happy is the man who has found wisdom". Unto them wisdom was not merely knowledge of the objective world, scientific truth. To them the first and primary fact of knowledge is reverence of God. It is knowledge made significant by wisdom and it is this "chachma" that righteousness of heart of which the Psalmists ~~wright~~. And to those who have this uprightness, this righteousness of heart comes joy.

What constitutes righteousness of heart? In the first place all the writers of the Bible seem to agree. First of all he must be a humble man. Humility, humbleness of heart is a prerequisite for man who wants to enjoy life. "The humble, the meek will inherit the earth." The writers of the Bible over and over again admonish man to forego pride/and ^{conceit,} arrogance. Why? Because these qualities of mind or heart inevitably doomed an individual to sorrow, to a colossal defeat. Life can never give the layman all the things that he thinks he needs in order to be happy. Nature and society simply will not accomodate themselves to our overwhelming sense of our importance. That type of man is forever parched. That kind

of person who is lustful for pride, who thinks that he is so important that he must be constantly on top - that man suffers from discontent and there is no cure for him.

One of the founders of Hebrew literature, one of the truly great spiritual figures in modern Jewish history, makes this observation: "Lust for honor is more of an impelling force than all other longings and desires. Were it not for this lust, a man would be willing to eat whatever he might get, to wear whatever might cover his nakedness and to dwell under whatever roof might protect him from the inclemencies of the weather. He would easily earn enough to live on, and would not feel the need to work hard in order to become rich. Yet a man assumes tremendous burdens, and there is no limit to his exertions, because he does not want to be regarded as inferior to his fellows."

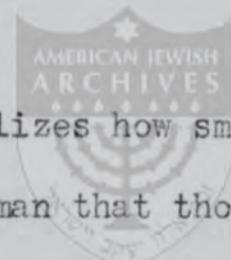
The Rabbis said: "Envy, cupidity and ambition take a man from the world." They admonished us: "Seek not greatness for thyself, and court not glory." That is marvelously, profoundly true.

It is good for people who are conceited and proud and who feel themselves superior in their hour of obsession with these ambitions to pull themselves in if they can and if it is not too late and to say to themselves as Job said:

Humility, my friends, does not mean subordinance. Humility is a kind of realization which gives us a sober perspective on ourselves and on life. It teaches us moderation, temperance. It cools off our excessive ardor. It dissipates some of our angers and our hates. It keeps us from consuming energy to arrive at goals which when attained mean nothing. And it is this humbleness of spirit, my friends, which the writers of the Bible advise us to take up unto ourselves which saves man from that deadliest

of diseases today which enslaves man more than any other disease - "worry".

Why do men eat out their hearts? Why do men go down broken to an untimely grave? Because they worry! And what is it that they worry about? Not that they haven't enough good or garments or shelter. They worry because they will not be able to keep up with the Jones' or the Cohens. They worry that men will think them inferior to their friends. That is the kind of worry that drives men to nervous break-downs. They have not acquired that contentment of spirit that comes from a humbleness of heart and the knowledge that even if they were a thousand-fold richer they would still be less than a grain of dust in the scheme of things. There is no cure for that kind of worry, my friends.



WRHS

It is only after a man realizes how small he is and when he comes to understand his littleness - "What is man that thou art mindful of him" - that he becomes a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory therein." It is out of this humbleness, this reverence that he is linked with God.

Now the authors of the Bible did not advise men to resign themselves. What I am speaking about now is not resignation. Resignation can be a very sorrowful or lackadaisical business. The attitude of defeat - that isn't the frame of mind the writers of the Bible spoke of. They spoke of an independent spiritual and intellectual independence which will enable man to surmount his fate, which will enable him to retain his self-respect, his dignity and which would enable him to continue in spite of his defeat and the depredations to which all men are subjected.

When the Rabbis spoke of a man being satisfied with his lot, this is what they had in mind. They wanted man to understand what is his lot in the world. They wanted man not to bind up his lot completely

but

with material things exclusively/with things that cannot be weighed, measured and counted - things such as social service - things of God. When one realizes that that is his lot in the world then he is on the way to happiness. That is what the Psalmist meant when he said:

"I have said unto the Lord, "Thou art my Lord"
I have no good but in Thee..
The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places
I have a goodly heritage..
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth.
Thou makest me to know the path of life,
In Thy presence is fulness of joy."

So much for righteousness of heart. Then righteousness of heart is only one element. There must be also a rightness of conduct. We must know not only what to do but how to act. We all live in society or rather in a complex of societies, small and large, family groups, business groups, factory groups, club groups, national groups, international groups, a whole series of concentric social worlds which overlap and which directly or indirectly affect man. These are the social influences of this world. And no man can escape them. Therefore it is necessary for a single human being to see that there is happiness in all of these social worlds which affect his life.

And the teachers of the Bible advise us that only as we can create a rule of justice, righteousness, love, compassion, tolerance brotherliness in the world can we, ourselves be happy because all these other things - injustice, intolerance, create that unhappiness which devastates human life.

Not one of us was responsible for the depression of the last six years. Yet how many of our lives were touched and affected by the economic disasters of that vast depression. Not any of us was responsible for the last World War and yet ten millions of men were slain and as many more people made miserable - their lives darkened by bereavement, by loss of dear ones in this universal disaster.

What must man do therefore if he wants to secure happiness for himself? He must strive to secure happiness for others too so as to establish the kind of society or societies which will preserve and make happiness secure.

This social approach to the problem of happiness is very important. In the first place we depend, in order to be happy, upon others. What makes us happy in most instances is not entirely the things that we eat, wear, do, the things that are pleasurable - not at all. What makes us happy is that we live in a sphere where people like us. It makes us unhappy when people hate us. Our happiness is therefore tied up with others and even more, the greatest happiness which we enjoy is that which we derive in bringing happiness to others.

What makes a father and a mother happy? The happiness of their children. When they see that something that they have done has brought happiness to their children, why their hearts swell up with joy. There is no joy like it. What makes the heart of a beloved happy? When he can bring happiness to the one he loves. So with everything.

Lastly, my friends, happiness comes to us when we have congenial work, when we do that which we can do, that which we are satisfied to do and that which we ought to do - that is when we are happy. Working faithfully, cheerfully at a task for which we are adequately equipped - that gives one a large measure of happiness. That is self-realization; - When a man is able to go forth to his work, to his labor until the evening worship - "And you will eat of the labor of your hands, the labor of your brain as well as of your brawn." (another quote)

These, my friends, are the Biblical and Scriptural definitions of happiness. These words were spoken long ago yet the changing scene has not changed the intrinsic code of conduct and attitudes which alone can give man happiness and which alone will enable a man to conquer whatever can be had in this world.



In short, the lust for honor is more of an impelling force than all other longings and desires. Were it not for this lust, a man would be willing to eat whatever he might get, to wear whatever might cover his nakedness, and to dwell under whatever roof might protect him from the inclemencies of the weather. He would easily earn enough to live on, and would not feel the need to work hard in order to become rich. Yet a man assumes tremendous burdens, and there is no limit to his exertions, because he does not want to be regarded as inferior to his fellows. The Rabbis said, "Envy, cupidity and ambition take a man from the world" (Ab. 4.20). They admonished us, "Seek not greatness for thyself, and court not glory" (Ab. 6.4)

No reasonable person can believe that the purpose for which man was created is attainable in this world, for what is man's life in this world? Who is really happy here, and who content? "The number of our years is threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore years, yet is their pride but travail and vanity" (Ps. 90.10), because of the suffering, the sickness, the pain and vexations which man has to endure, and finally death. Hardly one in a thousand finds that the world yields him true pleasure and contentment. And even that one, though he live a hundred years, passes away and is as though he had never been.

Ps. 16

I have said unto the Lord, "Thou art my Lord"

I have no good ent in Thee...

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places

I have a gordy heritige...

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth.

Thou madest me to know the path of life,

In thy presence is fulness of joy"

1. Cagliostro - "Path to the Bright" 1790-1816 c. 1790 - Ethical treatise
18c. - popular - Italian - Heb. letters. Mystic - Society - dead at 40
(duo t.)

2. (Is it an over-statement? Hardly.) Talk B. character - real, live, full-blooded people - one by one - and in each - some defeat, some sorrow, some frustration. No one, however great, or rich or powerful, completely or uninterrupted happy.

Adam - ~~dead~~ first parent - descended from Paracelsus

Cantharid. - Blodskål och grävande -

Akrahans - 1976 p/a n.d. - Trivello - 10

Trace - tragic family finds - sons - Jacob & Isaac.

Exhibit PN 2 file 132 n^o 6 -

slavery - prison -

Joseph - slavery - prison -
Moses - all the sublathers of a leader - Every rebellion,
angriahood - long pass on hit - hev -
hit hui hit -

Parnell - Sons - turned aside after bereavement - Took brother - & persecuted Justice - bitter loss of leadership - comfort with people - King - Even in his death - his peace disturbed -
1879 ALBERT MASTERS

Sant - melancholia fed by Every -

David - His own persecuted by wrathful jealousy & Ian-
bent by war - Reluctant & abhors - death, his
beloved child - A man, Sin, punishment & suffering -

end so thrust - Not all like Job - rocked upon wheel
but ~~nearly all~~ ^{3/11/18} ~~like~~ us by without its Round or its
spur - ^{P 3/12} Troub as sparsely upward
^{P 1/8} ^{P 1/2} ^{P 1/2}

3. First lesson - life is not a perfect paradise! It is not all peace-heat!

and it proclaims "There is death in the pot."

Sustained and unending H. is surely not within reach, mortal men. God did at least that much is a world.

4. But a woman, H. is within reach! and, to a great extent, it is in Man's power to determine how large that measure shall be. If h. water does not lift a bit, that person bathed in darkness & peace - neither do they see it as a baby's tears - forever wrapped in shadows & gloom.

Here again the remarkable variety, balance and steady "kin" of the men.

Unlike other teachers - they ~~do~~ do not discharge life, negative values of existence, or from upon human joy etc. - Except in the one instance of Kohl - who is arrogant and gives own mouth - or by the mouth of a later teacher who copied his work that it at their atrocity, Jessie J. Radcliffe. They do not urge men to regard the current pleasure, life - ~~a~~ ~~for~~ a pleasureable talker. But of human needs - as joyful. Their soul loves life - and the light & laughter, of H., of children. He wants to be worshipped with joy. ^{Author of D. 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5- Extend largely within man's own ordering + Free will - "I have
numerous helpful suggestions for - how to find H. & how to
avoid evill. - Sound counsel - strict test of time -

It is not well fully however by omnipotence
It is achieved by man

(a) Very little philos. Speculations as among Greeks on nature of H.
B. Waters not given to formal speculation as any subject.
little philos. - but much wisdom distilled out of experience
and inspired by Faith.

(b) They offer a code of proper public conduct, and a
pattern of that + attitude - which, if followed, will yield
man as much H. as is possible, in mundane existence.
of only a few. & can repeat this morning.

6. First with ref to that pattern - Frame of mind -
All seem to have "righteous, brave & wise" - the right frame of mind, ^{2/23/715/11} ^{1/15/11}
of this ^{1/15/11} ^{1/15/11} agreed that a prime requirement for it is ^{1/15/11}
Humility - Humbleness, heart full ^{1/15/11} ^{1/15/11} ^{1/15/11}
humble, H. then is achievable.

that comes from pious contemplation of God & His knownes,
from Knowledge, individual & racial, it shaped his faith from what
B. writers call תְּהִלָּה - וְיִתְּהַלֵּל תְּהִלָּה כִּי בְּתִלְלָה -
remembering that בְּתִלְלָה אֲלֹהִים בְּתִלְלָה —

Humility - not in sense of subordination to other men -
do otherwise, but in sense of realizing virtues, mystery
& majesty of Universe - and ones small, tho' not unimportant
place in it - They warn men against pride, arrogance,
covet. hon. they doom men to colossal blons of
disillusionment & rebuffs -

4

nature & society, will not accommodate ~~want~~ ^{openly} to our overwhelming
sense of our importance. Life can never give the vain man
and the proud man enough of praise or honor to satisfy
them. ~~such men~~ They are always pained by their ~~for ever burning~~ and
consumed by envy. A mounting fever of discontent-
etc., etc. (not) - Moses Chayen says 18c May.

⑥ It is good for a man, at times when he is dressed
with wild auxiliaries - even - armchair - to say with
Abraham - ^{+ with JRC} I will go myself -

(b) It gives us a Sobering perspective on awfuls of life.
It cuts off our excessive anger.
It dampfates raw jealousy and our hatred.
It makes for moderation - temperance -

7. And makes us fear much worry, which kills more
men than the most lethal disease.

Why do men ~~eat up~~^{break} their hearts - burn old before their time - consume their energies & go down to an early grave? # Keeping up with Joneses - a common trap.

They have not however argued that contentment / that
which comes from a humble heart - from a ^{a noble} that
even if they were a ~~thousand~~ ^{more} rich - as people - they would be
~~17/12/2011~~ ~~they are not happy in their lot~~
and in the comic scheme - less than a grain of sand

It is only after man realizes his little ways - "What is
man that he is an act unceas^rg, / him -- that he becomes a
little husk & the angels - & converses with play therus"
There comes to him a grave guiltiness of mind.

~~8/11. does not consist in refusing an offer to this state - & but
in a sp. & viril. independence which surrounds one's acts
- which enables a man to retain his self respect his
dignity, his conduct concerning his best & his life however
desires, and handles his own affairs. & to be in the end and still not entirely got
into by us being ^{craven, when we wish} slaves to ones appetites - that is
the sole~~

~~to~~ In other words, when one's lot is not conceived
of a being bound up with material things exclusively,
with things that can be weighed, measured & counted -
~~but~~ ^{success - for better & worse} bound up with characters - development, with human
deeds, with deep thinking, and noble aims - with God -
~~they are~~ ^{and with labor, stored up for us in God} can always rejoice in his lot - for they are
available and ready at hand for all uses, reproaches,
their & taken in life -

9) But we need not only a right frame of mind for it. but right
code of conduct - and opportunities for work which is congenial
to us - and which liberates our energies and fulfills ~~our~~^{the} functions
what we do - ~~it is~~^{is} a consequence or a result of action.
a) Then we live in society or in a complex of societies - small
& large - family groups, business groups, factory groups, club groups,
community groups, national groups, inter-groups - a whole
series of consecutive social orders - which interact.
H. cannot ~~remain~~^{pass} from one to another of these orders. There are
the influences of the upper in the middle class - the Negro
can travel but -

(b) Our sacred writers have admonished us that in all these worlds - a code of justice, fairness, tolerance, truth, compassion

will walk for peace, charity & H - While injustice, exploitation
selfishness, intolerance, hard-heartedness and contentiousness
will lead to war, ruin & desolation.

We need not quote B. Passage. The whole Bible
is shot thru with this sapient theme!
No man can be happy ^{or in a Vacuum} in isolation, whatever happen
in the world about us - directly affects us - Differences -
War - Nazis -

To achieve H- and work in for oneself and others
one must strive for a social order in which human
H. can be achieved & made secure

- 3/21/22 p.m. 1931

B

10. Congregational work - WRHS



Doing what we wish to do - fitted to do - ought to do - and
doing it well -

working faithfully, understandingly, cheerfully at a task
whatever for which we are adequately equipped that yields
a large measure of H. - that is Self Realization -

! July 20, 1931, New York

" 2nd in N - 226 13th Street Brooklyn 1131

x ds dms p b

then era labor

e 2! fms apd

7/21/61 21st June 1932 612!

① Refusal from other affairs from - we and others
of making other H. Parents, wife, friend, wantful

11. Others

Nature & God - simply accommodates us - otherwise over
life can never give man enough hours...

perched Fever -

only action - kill your self -

It is good - stressed - kill yourself -

Scheming perspective - covers off discipline - Moderation

7. And saves us from much Worry - deadly disease

Why do men eat out - grow old - consume
No humbleness - Keeping up with Joneses

They have not acquired Contentment which covers from
a thousand and more still, still, still
in cosmic scheme - less > gain > and

It is only after man values - spiritual
little leaves > angels

8. H. does not consist in "Resignation" - sorrows
"Independence" - surrounds lot - Retreats

To be in the world - & yet not I

To be master of fate - by not being slave himself

When one is left in not bound up - (Rousseau)
character - devil - human nature - clear thoughts - Note
with God - always rejoice (Just Ps. 16)

Their God loves life - light - laughter

Deut. 33: 21 God's plan is the 328 1st rule and
Rabbis - 1238 plan of all events etc.

Wanted man to be H. - and to live in peace
Did not want man to suffer in this world - so as to pay up

4). Extent of H. with in men - Not wilfully bestow
Numerous suggestions - test of time

{ Very little Philos. Speculation - Greeks - nature of H.
Debates - only good - Supreme - End - Perfection - Service
little Pleasure - much wisdom - distilled -

They offer a Code - and a Pattern - which of course
- of only a few -

5). Pattern - Frame of mind - Rightness of Heart - חִינָּה
This "Rightness" comes - Contemplation - Knowledge - דַּעַת
דְּנוּנָה לִבְרַפְּשֵׁה יְלִילָה
וְאֶלְיָהָה דְּנוּנָה וְלִילָה

6). All seem to agree - Humility - חֲסִידָה כְּלִילָה

Not subordination, obsequious -

Realization Vastness - one small

they warn against Pride, Anger, Covet - down
colossal blows - rebuffs

1. Take B. characters - in each some -

No one, however, great, rich, powerful, - completely, uninteresting. H

Adam - driven -

Cain - Abel -

Abraham - 316 -

Isaac - tragic family feud

Jacob - Exile - פָּרָעֹה שְׂרָפָה וְשִׁבְעָה -

Joseph - slavery - prison

Moses - Leadership - Easy

Rebellious - Grace

Samuel - Sons. Bruce -

King - וְאַבְנֵת הַמִּלְחָמָה
all the others

David -

Saul - נָבָל וְנָהָר

David - Wars - Absalom

Death - Son -

And so throughout. Not all like Job - None without
P.H. 1927 P.H. 1927 3rd part is

2. First lesson - Not Foolish Paradise! Ginger-Bread!

Cake and icing

Sustained and unending H - simply - reach

God did not build

how large

3. But a Measure of H - is - and, to a great extent, ~~the same~~

F. B. Writers - Kit Reall - Vale

Here, again, remarkable sanity -

B. Writers do not disparage, - negative, from
Kohelet -

Do not urge men - regard innocent joys - joyful