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Reflections on a Centennial, 1937.

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REFLECTIONS ON A CENTENNIAL

Dedicated to the one-hundredth anniversary of the founding of
the Jewish community of Cleveland

By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, October 31, 1937

When the first Jewish settlers came to Cleveland, America was still a very young country. In the whole of America there were probably no more than fifteen million people. The country was less than half its present size. There were no more than twenty-five states in the Union. The whole budget of the government was some twenty-five million dollars in comparison with the nine thousand million dollars which we spend today.

The City of Cleveland at that time had about five thousand people. The City of Chicago had just then been incorporated as a town. The entire Jewish population of the United States one hundred years ago was less than fifteen thousand. Most of the Jewish population was settled in the cities along the Atlantic seacoast. A great influx of European immigration which within a century was to raise the population of the United States from five million to seventy-five million had begun a few years previous to the time when the first Jewish settler came to Cleveland. Close upon the end of the Napoleonic wars, emigration began. In the twenties, they were coming to this country at the rate of ten thousand a year; in the thirties, at the rate of sixty thousand a year; and in the forties, at the rate of one hundred thousand a year.

The Napoleonic wars had left Europe torn and impoverished and a terrific political reaction followed the fall of it. As a result, the peoples of Western Europe turned with longing eyes to this new America, a land of freedom, a land of infinite opportunities. It is the greatest trek in history of mankind which began to come across land and water. They came from England

Scotland, Ireland and many of them came from Germany. Many of the emigrants from Germany were Jews. These Germans did not all settle on the Atlantic Seaboard but a good number of them crossed the Alleghenies to the Ohio and Mississippi valleys. And the German Jews moved along with this great stream of immigration also in large numbers across the mountains into this new and undeveloped heart of America. Because most of these German-Jews were small traders, peddlers, they followed the movement of the immigrants and settled in new trading posts and settlements. Nearly all Jewish immigration settlement began about this time - 1830 to 1850.

And so to Cleveland, in 1837, came a Jew by the name of Simpson Thorman, from Bavaria. He came as a trader in furs and hides. With the coming of this single Jew to Cleveland, the history of this great community of Cleveland definitely begins.

This represented the second stream of immigration. The who first immigrants/came to this world were Jewish immigrants - Columbus. They settled in the West Indies and in South and Central America which were in those days possessions of Spain and Portugal. The first Jewish settlers in the Western World were Spanish and Portuguese. The first Jewish settlement in the United States was in 1654 when a small group of Jews who had left Brazil and settled in New Amsterdam. That was the first settlement. Four years later a Jewish community settled in Newport. For two hundred years thereafter the Jewish people kept coming to the United States in small numbers, most of them of Spanish and Portuguese origin. That is the first stream of

immigration to the United States.

The second stream of immigration was German. The fall of Napoleon engulfed the Jews of Germany in a frightful political reaction - one of those waves of reaction which sweeps over that unhappy land. No country gets so discouraged in reaction as Germany does. It took the German Jews more than one hundred years to achieve their political rights. The struggle was long and painful and one full of throwbacks and recession. It began first with Moses Mendelssohn as a movement of emancipation in the intellectual and economic field. Later on in the political field. The first break in Medievalism came with the success of the army of Napoleon. The French invasion of Germany spelled the beginning of the end of the ghetto in Germany. The armies of Napoleon moved along and with it the battlecry of the French Revolution - Liberty, Equality, Fraternity - wherever they came, medievalism came to an end. The Jews, of course, benefited from it.

So we find that in 1806 in the Rhineland, in 1807 in Westphalia, in 1811 in Frankfurt and in 1812, in Prussia, the Jews begin to reap political rights - this was the first movement towards political emancipation. It was a very fixed upon the German people and almost a resented fact that emancipation of the Jews came as the result of foreign pressure.

With the fall of Napoleon, political reaction set in all over Europe particularly in Germany. In Germany a type of nationalism set in which ravaged the German people - that intolerant nationalism, intensified chauvenism so that by 1819 we find in many ~~xxxxxx~~ cities of Germany parades down the streets

and that cry of the crusades "Hep! Hep!" and bloody excesses result. The priveleges granted the Jews were rejected and cancelled and ignored and the Jews are once again thrown back into the ghetto world of disabilities, discrimination and handicaps.

The German Jews had tasted, if only for a few short years, freedom. For a few short years they had been able to live outside the gates of the ghetto. They caught the gleam of a freer, brighter day. There were not content to return to the indignities and restrictions of the ghetto. So that the great wave of immigration then began towards the new world. Jews, more than the rest of the population felt the urge, the yearning, the drive to emigrate. To the German Jews it meant in many instances not money, escape from poverty but escape into a new land of refuge. Think of it - there across the sea there was no Jewish problem, no infamous legal restrictions against Jews, a land where all are equal, where a man is a man, a citizen regardless of race, a land teaming with opportunities and filled with prospects. So they came, first by the hundreds and then by the thousands from Germany.

They were steady, strong, industrious and hardworking people mostly from small towns in Germany. They were mostly peasant stock, not particularly learned or education. They were poor, unlike the Spanish and Portuguese Jews who came to the United States and who brought with them capital, wealth. These immigrants from Germany, like the ones from Scotland, Ireland, had nothing except faith, high hope, willingness to work. They were of the splendid stuff which the New World required. They were the very people to

break the furrows of the new country.

These new immigrants were quick to learn the language the ways of the country. They adjusted very easily. The new air which they breathed was like wine to their souls. The American environment was congenial. Their love for America was instantaneous. They were quick to succeed in this world. It wasn't hard for a young man willing to work to build himself up economically, quickly to pass from a peddler to a storekeeper, a manufacturer. Before long he could send for his family and build himself a home. And before went to school long his children/grew up. The second generation advanced more rapidly and we find their lives not as hard as their fathers'. They were destined to contribute mightily to the industrial, commercial development of the cities in which they found themselves. The second and third generations became builders and big industrial builders of large stores. A great number began to enter the professions, to enter the full life of the American communities.

These first settlers of course had as their first duty to make a living for themselves and their families. But they did not forget other loyalties - to their people, to their faith and to their country. And within two years after the arrival of the Jews to Cleveland, you find the beginnings of a synagog in this city. The Jews were banding themselves into the Israelitische Society. They established a place to worship. Within a year they had a cemetery..

That is the beautiful thing about the Jews throughout the world, the great secret of Jewish survival. Wherever the Jews were found, they quickly upon settlement, established a synagog,

Jewish schools. The old commandment which was given to the Jewish children on the way out of Egypt was: "Thou shalt make for Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among thee." That they never forgot - in the wilderness, all over the world - they immediately built a wilderness for their spiritual faith.

Of course it was some years before the great leaders of liberalism in religion came to America - Isaac M. Wise, Adler - others. Before very long the levels of the old world as well as some of the ideals which germinated in Germany in the ^{Old} world began to germinate. The ritual was reformed. It was not long before the German vernacular gave way to English in the service and in the preaching.

The first settlers had not been long here in Cleveland before they were joined by other immigrants from Hungary. In the sixties the Jews from Hungary began to come in increasingly ^{third} large numbers. In the seventies and eighties there was a wave of immigration from Poland. With the growth of a city of a few thousands to hundreds of thousands, with the growth of the city into a metropolitan center there arose the need for social agencies. The Jews were the first to build and organize in their behalf. They took a full share of responsibility. Institutions sprang up. Orphanages, Homes for the Aged, Hospitals, social service, Talmud Torahs, fraternal organizations, many charitable institutions. When the pogroms broke out in Eastern Europe ~~and~~ and impoverished broken Jews began coming to these shores, Jewish communities took care of these immigrants, made preparation for their absorption into the economic life of the Jewish communities.

When in the twentieth century the World War again brought disaster, again Cleveland Jewry in common with all other Jews in America did its full share in bringing aid and sympathy to their unfortunate brothers. The Jews of this community, during their hundred years of settlement here have shared and helped to build not merely the intellectual and civil life of the city but has contributed to the civic reform and in the arts and sciences. So for one hundred that years/the Jews have been living, laboring in this City of Cleveland, they have written a record which is not unworthy, a record of which the Jews may well be proud.

There are a few thoughts which come to one's mind as one stands on the occasion of a centennial celebration and scans the stretch of one hundred years back and tries to look forward a bit into the future. The first thought that comes to the mind of Jews on an occasion of this kind is that the Jewish people in the City of Cleveland have lived and worked and achieved. They live and belong here. They helped to build the city. They helped to make it. They were among its pioneers. They were not the late arrivals at a table which others prepared. The Jews were here in Cleveland long before most of the other nationalities which make up the cosmopolitan life here. They were among the first. That is well for us here. Occasionally one hears of alien Nazi agitators who haven't been here long enough to lose their sauerkraut accent the lack of lecture on/patriotism of the Jews and on our un-Americanism. It is well for these people to remember that Cleveland was built by Jews in common with other people.

A second thought is that a sense of unity developed among the Jews in this city in the course of these years. I think it was Seneca who said that "a society is a union of men, not the men themselves." A community is a union of men, not the men themselves. Ten, fifty, eighty, a thousand people do not make a union. When people unify in some common activity, then they can be called a community. It was not so long ago but what a community like this was divided, disintegrated. There were German Jews, Eastern European Jews. There was a sharp line of cleavage - the social, the economic, the religious. There were orthodox Jews, conservative Jews, reform Jews. There were sharp lines of demarkation in Cleveland. There were Zionists, and anti-Zionists. The Jewish group was fragmentized not only in this community but in all other American communities. All these lines of differences, of demarkation have not disappeared. But it is gratifying to see how time has worn away some of these sharp differences. The Jews of this community and other large communities have come to lay stress on one common Jewish destiny, a more frequent meeting of minds, and a desire to understand each other, to make concessions for the sake of friendly cooperation. There is far less provincialism than there was forty or fifty years ago. Somehow there is a real and honest effort being made to discover a Jewish community soul. The trend is unmistakable in this direction towards greater unity in Jewish community life.

Even religiously speaking, there is a greater religious approximation in religious groups than there was a few decades ago. We are beginning to understand that what is important is Judaism, itself, not orthodoxism, reformism, conservatism but Judaism

which is more important, While I do not look forward to a time when there will be on type of Judaism - it is not desirable - yet I am looking forward to the time when there will be a much closer cooperation as well as a profounder interaction between the various philosophies of Judaism in this country.

What of the future? What of the next one hundred years? What does the future hold for our children and their children in the years to come? And it is clear that the years in the immediate future as we begin the second century, are not likely to be quite as serene as the years passing because that serenity has disappeared not only from Jewish life but from conditions. We are living in times of storm. The world is full of apprehension, sensation. The very foundations of democratic life are being shaken. New philosophies are coming into the world.

When the first Jewish settlers - Hungarian, Eastern-Jewish settlers came to this country they were beckoned by the great ideals of democracy, freedom, human equality. The great ideals of the American revolution echoed these rights. The great ideals of the French Revolution had become the beacon light, the torch held up for a fine humanity all over the world. They had become unquestionable truths of the new day. The new truths of the day were being built upon the foundation of a Declaration of Independence which declared that all men are equal. Institutions were being built all over the world in which the individual was protected against the tyranny of the state and government. That dominated the whole 19th century through the 20th century.

This second century which is now beginning for a Jewish community like ours begins with a new incantation of a new set of

ideals. There is a new complexity of ideas today more or less pre-revolutionary ideas which stressed leadership, nationalism, racialism, force, dictatorship, the submergence of the individual to the tyranny of the state. These ideals are today in a life and death struggle with the ideals of the last century so that you have the kind of a world as we have today which is arming itself to the teeth for the next world war, a world in which actually a new world war has already begun in Spain, China a world of bitter class struggle, a world which is likely therefore to bear down hard on a minority such as the Jewish minority.

When the first Jewish immigrants left Germany to come to America, conditions were bad in 1837, but not nearly as bad as they are in Germany in 1937. You did not have in Germany in 1837 a whole government poisoned to its very core by a brutal shameless ~~addism~~ ^{antisemitism}. You did not have in 1837 the highly organized anti-Semitic movement that there is in 1937. The intellectuals of Europe at that time were the champions of the Jews. It was the reactionary, military clique, the religious reactionaries who were foes of Israel. But any man who had emancipated himself intellectually was a liberal and therefore a champion of Jewish emancipation. Today that land is the seedbed of anti-Semitism.

So that the second century begins in a mood very much less serene. Nevertheless the Jew who can look back not only a hundred years, but a thousand, two thousand, four thousand years, is not discouraged...

What we need and what we ought to draw out of the experience of one hundreds of building and achievement are self-confidence and self-esteem. "What you think of yourself is much more important than what others think of you," was the wise saying of a famous Roman philosopher.

What we need is faith in this pioneering power of our people and faith in America, something of the faith which inspired the life and the movements of the early pioneers-one hundred fifty years of constitutional tradition and self-government, one hundred fifty years of magnificent growth and development through democracy. We need faith in the great inner strength and reserves of American ideals.

What we need for the future is that same wisdom which belonged to our pioneers, namely the making of Judaism, the synagogue, the center in our lives. The whole hundreds years of development of the Cleveland Jewish community radiated right out of the synagogue. Everything that was built in this community received inspiration from the synagogue... In countries where the Jews constitute a minority, unless this minority is held together by traditions, emotional, religious loyalty which expresses itself in the building of temples, synagogues, Jewish community life disappears.

look back and

A Jew who can/see how a handful of Jewish immigrants who came here poor, possessed of nothing but strong character and a willingness to work - how such a small group grew in a few years into a Jewish community of eighty-five thousand souls - one has seen this miracle occur over and over again - would not despair of the future even though the moment looks black.

What you need for the future is that spirit which was recommended to Joshua when he took charge of his people's future. And when he faced his people he said to them "Be strong! Be courageous! Don't be afraid!" What

we need and what we ought to draw out of our experience of one hundred years of building and achievement are self-confidence and self-esteem. What you think of yourself is much more important than what others think of you. It was a wise Roman philosopher who said: "If we think well of ourselves we will have power to master, to overcome the greatest of obstacles." We have done it. The pioneers in this community did it. What we need is faith in this pioneering power of our people and faith in America, something of the faith which inspired the life and movement of the early pioneers to one hundred fifty years of constitutional tradition and self-government, one hundred fifty years of magnificent growth and development through democracy and that this democracy will not be wiped out in a day or in a year by the madness and aberrations of the hour. We need faith in the great inner strength of American ideals.

What we need for the future is that same wisdom which belonged to our pioneers, namely the making of Judaism, the synagogue, the center of our lives. The whole hundred years of the development of the Jewish community of Cleveland radiated from the synagogue. Everything that was built in this community received inspiration from the synagogue. If religion would weaken, our community would disintegrate. All of our institutions would languish.

In countries where Jews constitute a minority, unless that minority is held together by tradition, by emotional and religious loyalty which expresses itself in the building of temples and synagogues, Jewish community life would disappear.

You can look forward, in the next hundred years, provided we give our children who will bear the burden of the next hundred years, enough of Jewish inspiration and loyalty to enable them to bring together

to turn events to the best accounts provided they will have received strength from Jewish teachings to surmount all the obstacles - and there will be many obstacles in the days to come - if we kindle the torches of tomorrow with the fires of our own lives, there is no cause to be pessimistic about the future of our people in this city or in any city, not only in the next century but in centuries to come.

The Jews are here to stay. There are five million Jews in the United States today. That is not a negligible number and the increase is astonishingly rapid. The Jewish community belongs here. The Jewish community has helped to make this a great nation through its sacrifices of mind and heart, through its labor, physical and mental, through its inspiration and genius.

The Jewish people will continue to live here. We wish it to continue to live here a noble, self-respecting, creative life for its own sake and for the sake of America.

We can do that first by each one of us in his sphere of life and a living as noble/serviceable/life as as he can, in living in this land, and by raising our children to that kind of a serviceability and noble life - not self-seeking, careerism, self-aggrandizement.

It is not an accident of history in my great faith that the Jews were driven out of Spain the very year that American was discovered. It was not an accident of history that when the gates of the Old World were closed to the Jews that the gates of the New World were opened. It was not an accident that when black reaction set in Germany that the new land beckoned our people here. It is not an accident of history that when the Jewish community of Germany was crashed down on in the last few years, thousands

of people again found a haven of refuge within this land.

We owe much to America. Let us give much in return in the days
to come.



1/ Young - 15 M. - Less $7\frac{1}{2}$ - 25 States - 25 M. with 9 Billions
Cleveland - 5000 - Chicago

J. pop. Less 15,000 - Mostly off sea-board.

Great Daphne had began a few yrs back - 5 to 75 M.
close of Napol. Wars.

→ In the 20 - 10,000 a yr / 30 - 60,000 / 40 - 100,000

A Europe - form. unprejudiced - longing eyes - freedom - off

Many came from England etc. Continental - Germany - Jews

Did not all stop on off sea-board.

Per. Jews, being freedom - small freedom -

Nearly all import - towns in middle west. 1830-1850

thus Cleveland saw in 1837 - Simpson Thorman -

"huskies" - freedom - freedom - With him 85,000

2/ Not just - 2nd stream - Columbus - New Amster. 1654

Brazil - Newport - 1658.

In about 200 yrs - slow - mostly Sp. & Portug

3/ Fall of Nap - Jews engulfed in Reaction - hysterical were
100 yrs - large - pamper - recessions. Began 11.11.18
first in intellect - been -

In Rev. & America - resented - foreign pressure

Rhineland 1806 / Westphalia 1807 / Frankfurt 811 / Russia 1812
Fall of Nap - Bochen - Nationalism. Help! Help!

Cancel

Gen. Jews - tasted freedom - independence -

Amer. beckoned - loomed large -

Amer. Revol - challenging postulates - 1812

So that when Nap. Wars were over - war - gigantic

Trek -

Dearest - vision Nap. to Jews. Thank it!

No J. problem - no cursed byl discom! hate!

Galling memories! A land - all equal!

Teeming - glorious

4. And so they came! Sturdy - small villages - not burned

Poor - unable Spanish - Had only faith - Stuff
break furious

Quick to learn - Adjusted easily - new air - Amer.
environment congenial

Love for new home - loved it in their dreams

Passivity - Civil War -


5/ Just to succeed - not hard - involved into - relatives home
son then children - Second generation - way not to hard
develop indust. Power life of city - banks - papers

6/ who not forget other by alikes - within eyes -
J. survival - power reply photo of all

7/ Orthodoxy - ~~Reform~~ - Great Leader - then that - heaven
Reform an individual - seems amazing



9/ In the 60's ^{the after} ~~immigrants~~ from Hungary join them.
 In the 70's ~~the after~~ ^{the after} ~~part~~ in the 80's 190's ~~immigrants~~ from
 Poland - 3rd large wave / ~~immigrants~~ -
 need for shelter - relief - junk to go in their
 behalf. A leader in
 J. Gorn. new to them, themselves - need
disturbance spring up - orphanage - Homes - Hospital, Sillman
seems - Federation - Tahand Tach - The loan -
Day nursery - a complete guide to Israel, cul. cultural of course
A leader in Federation -
Freeze Relief - World War -

10/ Arise up - got - Edemat - Arise Reform.
War -  - a record not unworthy -

11/ And so for a 100 years we have been standing here.
We belong - we helped build this city - we helped to
make it. We are not recent arrivals at a table
 which others have prepared - Jews were here before
 most other nationalities who made up our community.
City were here. When Nazi Antisemitism - who haven't been
here long enough to lose their parentland accent ought
to bear this in mind.

12/ We have become unity - Strongly is a the unity &
we are not the men Eos - Jer. East Eos

Outsider's view - 21st cent + 21st cent - Capitalist Holm.
Time has been a solvent of particularisms - Prejudices -
Common history - ~~more~~ greater desire to discern

* common of denomination - a more frequent
meeting of minds - a desire to understand ~~each~~ ^{each}
other - + make concessions for sake of friendly
cooperation.

* Less provincial - + fragmented - solidarity
→ liberating community soul.

12/ just as sharp decline - but for R. Eng. Jans
~~as~~ as being fast obliterated - just as 21st +
21st differ - have passed a crisis - to
diff. bet. North - America + Europe just - will pass
less as the years go on - We altogether obli-
terated - not means - unimportant - but not
Power for continuing + divisions

13/ What the future - the next 100 yrs - hold for us - our
children - we do not know!

Certainly for less serene - for times as full of
storm - ~~the~~ We are living in times of crisis -
tension - such as last century - until last 2 decades hardly
knew - Very foundations are being shaken - new
philos. & faith - new concepts of Econ. org. & soc

couldn't -

Jews under attack - even more than post war.
true -

In June - when our settlers came - for blacks
used disabilities visited upon Jews & when they left,
Elmer - gauged, prejudiced, exploited An

How long that will continue? What outcome!
only for Jews -

of what we need for future - ①

4/1/75

Joshua - 5th Generation

② Self-esteem: 'What you think of yourself is much
more important than what others think of you' Jews

③ Faith & Power in themselves - in America

The Jewish Faith & the American Tradition will win out
Main program can be temporarily checked - not permanently stopped.
150 yrs. of Am. Jew. Trad. has many things to report.

④ First our faith - our pride - to our children -

Kindle the torch, to march with the fire, to say

for them the knowledge - inspiration - to over-leap

out-duties - turn events to the best account

④ Centrality of Rel. & Synagogue - All life begins
in Syn - radiated from it - Any attempt to secularize
it - weakens it, creates loss of life collapses -