



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

Reel
158

Box
56

Folder
569

Kindling Lights in a Darkened World, 1938.

KINDLING LIGHTS IN DARKENED WORLD

The ruler of the Syrian Greeks in the Second Century before the Common Era attempted a "Gleichschaltung" of his entire empire, a religious coordination very much like the political and intellectual coordinations going on in many parts of the world today. Antiochus encountered no resistance anywhere to his program except in Judea where a greater spiritual force than that which was contained in paganism put on a determined, and in the end, successful resistance. Ethical Monotheism backed by a people small in numbers but large in spiritual resistance joined in mortal combat with the non-ethical polytheism of paganism. Paganism in the Second Century before the Common Era represented many of the ideas and attitudes which are again raising their heads in the paganism of our own day. Its Gods possessed no moral character. They represented blind forces of nature which had to be propitiated. Long before the time of the Maccabees, the Gods of the Greeks had become mirth-provoking characters in the plays of the comic playwrights of Greece. They were represented as drunkards, deceivers, licentious, and lacking in all moral dignity. Judaism recoiled from such an attitude to divinity. ~~and~~ It envisaged God in terms of holiness, perfection, the object of supreme love and reverence.

Paganism proclaimed the supremacy of the state. The symbol of the state, the bust of the emperor, was in every temple of the ancient world and was worshipped. Judaism insisted on the supremacy of law and the will of God to which state and emperor alike were subordinate. The ancient world new little of sympathy and compassion for the weak, the poor, the aged and the slave. Judaism proclaimed the law of kindness and mercy in defense of the weak and the handicapped, and the equality of all men in the sight of God. Paganism idealized the man of war. Judaism, the prince of peace. The ancient world conceived of national destiny

in terms of military conquest and expansion. Judaism proclaimed the ideal of "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, nor learn war any more." Because the Maccabees triumphed, these ideals were preserved and they became the precious legacy through Judaism and Christianity to mankind.

A revived paganism is again threatening these classic traditions of both Judaism and Christianity in the modern world. A new Maccabean struggle is on. The outcome, to those who know history, can not be in doubt.



1. Rock of Ages - 1841, 1851, 1861 - (Just)

Catalogue of 4 Persecutions: Egypt - Babylon - Persia - Greece

" " 4 Arch-enemies - 2000 - 21000 - 100000 - 01/01/01

Old Hymn stops at 2c - with knots

21 Centuries have elapsed - and how many other - land-enemies

"Full sated was my soul with ill, my strength was spent with sorrow"

"How often did we quaff the wine of humiliation - H2 111"

and, how often, saved, Enemies destroyed, Redeemed, Love to sing songs - festivals -

Miracle of feeble light.

2. Often persecuted - but not only people. Suffered out?

Something inherently provocative of persecution? Anti-semites.

Exposed minority - and every minority - Rel. & Racial

① Christians in Pagan Rome - Martyrs - accused -

② Protestants in Catholic lands - 16c. in France -

Huguenots - Edicts - Massacre of St. Bartholomew -

Aug. 24-1572 .. Thousands slain -

Temporary Truce - Edict of Nantes - 1598 - (Just)

Revocation - 1685 - 400,000 had to flee

③ Catholics in Protestant - England - since 16c.

Not until 1829

Cromwell Ireland - slaughter - land - Penal Laws

3/ Note - ~~In Ancient~~ ~~History~~ - ~~Eg~~ ~~and~~ ~~Persia~~ - Humor

Egypt = "Wax story" - exterminate.

Persia = 1000 years

Babylon - a 1000 year defeat - such as Bab. itself experienced
Greece - "Slack shattering" program - which occurred
everywhere but failed with Jews - Religion

4/ It is interesting to note - In Persia - Jew was able to
lyst - Egypt - miracles

Persia - 1000 years of a Jew or Jewess.

Babylon - 600 years of a Jew or Jewess.

By their own efforts -

5/ All other persecutions unintentional. But Persia - why?

What was it that Antiochus wanted - Submerge

Symbolized in Salisbury - Law, Law & Law - Food

Answers -

Guarded Sp. unintentional of Eth. more than small
against Paganism race

Only light burning in dark world

① Gods - Forces of Nature - No Moral Character - Ugly
② Supreme of State - Justice - All Moral Weaknesses - Some
Supremacy of Law - Best Emperor - Supremacy of Law

(3) Cruelty - Armed - Slavery - Poor - Old - Weak

(4) ~~Immunity to poor~~

(5) War - Peace - Phil - Phil 13/11 - Phil 12/11

6/ These lights are kindled in ancient used - Taken definitely
Blown out in our day - Revered Pagans -
Will have to kindle them again - see oil defiled Struggle - Death
to defenders - Driven from home - Food to kids -

7/ Jack to xxx and this was

Elsie

Hannah

WRHS



Such care and oil - much will be wrong at

In U.S. + Movements deny franchise - out of office

1829 - Amer. Protest. Assoc.

1837-44 - Native Amer. Party

1855-61. Know-nothing Party - Riots - Churches burnt -

1896 - Amer. Protest. Assoc.

Since War - K. K. K.

Literature - Vast -

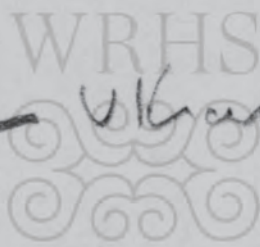
inherent antagonism bet. Col. + Americans

④ Nat. Minorities

Americans

Poles - Germans -

Ukrainians etc.



"More than 400 proclamations, edicts or declarations attacking the Huguenots in their households and their civil freedom, their property and their liberty of conscience, were promulgated during the years which preceded the revocation, the Edict of Nantes (1598).

On Oct 18, 1685 ~~400,000 had to flee~~
Many emigrated to England ~~to Prussia~~ and became
very useful citizens, their adopted countries -

Purim 1938

asked, "Who is in the Court?" And it chanced that Haman was in the Court. ~~And he~~ asked, "What shall be done to the man who does honor to the King?" Haman thought that ^{he} it was himself ~~who~~ was to be honored. ~~But~~ It chanced that it was ~~not~~ Haman who was to be honored but Mordecai. Chance! In fact the day upon which all the Jews of Persia were to be put to death was selected by chance. Purim actually means the casting of lots, The whole fate of the Jews of Persia depended on chance, upon a strange conjunction of uncontrolled events.

If Esther had ~~not~~ found favor in the eyes of the King - because it was under pain of death to approach the King - if the King had ~~not~~ chanced to look and see Esther and if she had ~~not~~ chanced to find favor in his eyes - No Purim - Nothing!

Chance! And how much in this Megillah in this story of Esther there is of contrariness, of ~~reverses~~, of topsy-turviness. ~~Just think!~~ Haman, anti-Semite, enemy of the Jews, comes to the King, ~~and~~ asks him to destroy the Jews and bribes him with an offer of ten thousand talents of silver, ~~to destroy the Jews.~~ In our history, it is usually the reverse! It was the Jews who came to the king to try to bribe him to allow them to live. How often did the Jews have to buy protection from the king, from the state, from a tyrant for the sheer privilege of living.

^{ARE MANY} There ~~is a~~ strange reversal of roles ~~here~~. Haman is supposed to be led through the streets of Shushan bedecked in royal robes. Instead, ^{it is} ~~the one he hates most~~ ^{who} Mordecai ^{who} goes around ~~in sackcloth and ashes~~, is led through the streets bedecked in royal garments. ~~There is a mighty strange transformation.~~ Haman

asked, "Who is in the Court?" And it chanced that Haman was in the Court. He asked, "What shall be done to the man who does honor to the King?" Haman thought that he, himself, was to be honored. It chanced that it was not Haman who was to be honored but Mordecai. Chance! In fact the day upon which all the Jews of Persia were to be put to death was selected by chance. Purim actually means the casting of lots. The whole fate of the Jews of Persia depended on chance, upon a strange conjunction of uncontrolled events.

If Esther had not found favor in the eyes of the King--because it was under pain of death to approach the King--if the King had not chanced to look and see Esther, and if she had not chanced to find favor in his eyes--No Purim--Nothing!

Chance! And how much in this Megillah, in this story of Esther there is of contrariness, of topsy-turviness. Haman, anti-Semite, enemy of the Jews, comes to the King, asks him to destroy the Jews and bribes him with an offer of ten thousand talents of silver. In our history, it is usually the reverse! It was the Jews who came to the king to try to bribe him to allow them to live. How often did the Jews have to buy protection from the king, from the state, from a tyrant for the sheer privilege of living.

There are many strange reversals of roles. Haman is supposed to be led through the streets of Shushan bedecked in royal robes. Instead, it is Mordecai who is led through the streets bedecked in royal garments. Haman

always an Esther.

~~There is~~ ^{was} a keen observation made by one of the later Rabbis. When Haman was angered by Mordecai because Mordecai would not kneel to him, he was not satisfied to kill Mordecai alone. He wanted to destroy all his people, all the people of Mordecai.

It is of the genius of our race in an hour of tragedy to produce a Mordecai and an Esther. That is why, ~~my friends,~~ we are admonished to read the Megillah on Purim because there is in it, the distilled wisdom of experience. Jewish life ~~my friends,~~ in the diaspora is a wandering one. A wandering ~~life~~ is so full of mishaps, accidents, ~~of~~ misfortune. How often the fate of the Jews in exile depended on the eccentricities, and caprices of some tyrant, schemer, extortionist, paramour, fanatic or apostate. How often have world events over which the Jews have no control - plague, war and economic depression - how often have these accidents of ~~fate~~ broken myriads of people upon the wheels of torture. ~~this was all~~ ^{that we had in our experience, it} ~~whim, chance, fortune~~
If these were things known in our experience, our ~~experience~~ would have been a nightmare. ~~and~~ The morale of the Jews would long ago have been shattered. There was always more. There was ~~and~~ intelligence, ~~and~~ courage. There were the Mordecais and Esthers ^{who stood fast} against all the uncontrollable factors in Jewish experience. ~~Against our seeming defenselessness, homelessness,~~ Our people, a wandering people, was always able to ~~set off as a~~ counterpoise to ~~that which~~ ^{The} was uncontrollable in its experience those powerful agents which ~~x~~ were definitely within its control - faith, confidence, truth, courage, and ~~in all moments of crises,~~

always an Esther.

It is of the genius of our race in an hour of tragedy to produce a Mordecai and an Esther. That is why we are admonished to read the Megillah on Purim because there is in it, the distilled wisdom of experience. Jewish life in the diaspora is so full of mishaps, accidents, misfortune. How often the fate of the Jews in exile depended on the eccentricities, and caprices of some tyrant, schemer, extortionist, paramour, fanatic, or apostate. How often have world events over which the Jews have no control--plague, war and economic depression--how often have these accidents of fate broken myriads of people upon the wheels of torture.

If this was all that we had in our experience, it would have been a nightmare. The morale of the Jews would long ago have been shattered. There was always more. There was intelligence and courage. There were Mordecais and Esthers who stood fast against all the uncontrollable factors in Jewish experience. Our people, a wandering people, was always able to counterpoise to the uncontrollable in its experience those powerful agents which were definitely within its control--faith, confidence, truth, courage, and

Like

rare spirits ~~of the breed of~~ Mordecai and Esther.

"Chance and change lay not their hands upon truth."

That is the recondite theme of the Story ^{and so} ~~of Esther and as long~~
~~as we have these,~~ we can rejoice. As long as we can count in our
midst a number of men and women of the breed of Mordecai and
Esther who never lose faith, ~~who never lose courage and who~~
are ready to face ^{death} ~~doubt~~ for the sake of the ^rpeople, so long
will night turn for us always into day, darkness into light, sorrow
into joy. "To the Jews there will always be a full measure of
joy, happiness, rejoicing, pride and happiness." end here.

~~Three mitzvot you must perform this coming Purim. In
1937 the Jews of the world need to have a day to rejoice when
so many of our days are bleak. Let us rejoice in the sense of
our eternity, of our mastery over fortune, of our capacity to
survive Hitlers and Hamans. Let us give gifts to the poor. The
second mitzah is to make ~~yourself~~ yourself happy by making others
happy and thirdly, read the Megillah, the story of Esther.~~

rare spirits like Mordecai and Esther.

"Chance and change lay not their hands upon truth." That is the recondite theme of the Story and so we can rejoice. As long as we can count in our midst a number of men and women of the breed of Mordecai and Esther who never lose faith, who are ready to face death for the sake of their people, so long will night turn for us always into day, darkness into light, sorrow into joy. "To the Jews there will always be a full measure of joy, happiness, rejoicing, pride and happiness."

