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Religion in Present Day Jewish Life, 1939.

RELIGION IN PRESENT-DAY JEWISH LIFE

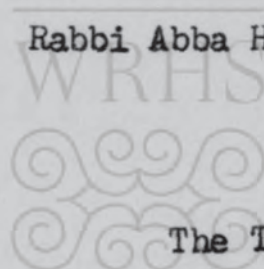
by

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

at

The Temple

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Religion in Present-Day
Jewish Life
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(Sermon 520.1)

Many factors have tended to make religion of secondary importance in the life of our people.

Religion, generally, has been pushed into a subordinate position in the Western World. Science has steadily divested it of many of its franchises. The satisfactions which men experienced in the increase of power, wealth and material well-being, yielded by science, placed the latter upon the pedestal which was formerly occupied by religion, whose gifts were now less prized and sought after. Science successfully refuted many pronouncements ^{which were made by religion in} its sacred texts ^{of religion} concerning the universe, nature and man. This ^{cast suspicion upon much else in religion.}

The separation of church and state, the growth ~~in the functions~~ in civil authority and the contraction of ecclesiastical authority, the secularization of education and, in the realm of speculative thought, the divorce of philosophy from theology - all these were both cause and effect of the diminishing importance of religion in modern society.

Other forms of loyalty clamored for supremacy, nation, country, race, class. Each of these derived its sanctions and mandates from sources other than religion, and proceeded to construct systems of thought with little or no reference to it.

The Jewish people left the ghettos of the Western World at a time when these secular movements were unfolding. The world from which the Jews emerged was thoroughly pervaded by religion. It had been thus pervaded for centuries. Every phase and activity of life was bound by its discipline. Nevertheless, the Jews yielded to the new temper of the age as readily as any other people. In some countries they not only caught up with the new secular mood of the Western World but out-distanced it in dogmatic ardor and intensity.

There transpired among the Jewries of Western and Eastern Europe not only reform movements designed to revamp their religious ideas and practices, to

"modernize" them and to bring them into consonance with the new outlook of Europe, but also strong centrifugal movements away from Judaism altogether - movements of flight, not towards other faiths so much - these latter flights were dictated, as a rule, by careerism and social escalade - but towards religious negativism and indifference, expressed in non-affiliation with the synagogue and in a renunciation of the entire religious regimen of Judaism.

This flight from Judaism was also motivated by strong political and economic considerations. Throughout the 19th century, Jews struggled for emancipation. They reached out after complete equality. They believed that their distinctive religious beliefs and traditional ~~customs~~ way of life segregated them and disadvantaged them among men. They further believed that by surrendering them they would succeed in acquiring the rights and privileges which other peoples possessed. This political and economic motif behind the flight complex was soon rationalized into a system of thought, conveniently neutral and agnostic, which discounted religion generally and proclaimed that the scientific progress of mankind had finally outstript religion and that while religion may still have a certain usefulness for the young, the poor and the unenlightened, cultured and prosperous folk can get along very well without it. All religious and racial differences were certain to be merged very soon in a common brotherhood of men, dedicated to the ~~unadulterated~~ life of pure reason. The mighty accents of the American and French Revolutions and the other up-surgings political struggles of the century reverberated through all this hopeful and wishful thinking. Thus Enlightenment and Emancipation were the Pied-Piper whose music beguiled many Jews away from their ancient loyalties and spiritual securities.

The wealthy and the well-placed Jews especially pampered themselves with these comforting notions. The richer they became and the more important positions they occupied, the less need they had for religion. The upper classes

which succeeded in reaching, if not the center, then at least the periphery of the non-Jewish world, were most supercilious in their attitude towards Judaism. When men are prosperous they find it easy to dispense with God - especially with a Jewish God.

Fortunately not all Jews were of the same mind. Many refused to exchange spiritual treasures for material advantages. They saw neither the need nor the wisdom of it. They were of the opinion that if freedom and equality are to come to all men, they should come also to the Jews as a matter of right, as a restoration of that which belongs to them and to all men as a natural endowment, and not in payment for unwarranted sacrifices of religious convictions, a distinctive culture and an historic way of life. They furthermore suspected that the new millennium might turn out to be quite as much of a mirage as many others in the long past of Israel, ~~had been~~ and, on the basis of past experiences, they feared that should another such reaction in their political and economic fortunes set in, Jews would find themselves spiritually shattered, homeless and utterly bereft, unless they had ^{the} secured sanctuaries of Jewish life and faith into which to retreat for refuge and solace. Many other Jews, out of force of habit or because of the strong appeal of ancient ties and memories, remained constant. So that Judaism was not lost.

Throughout the 19th and the early 20th centuries, wide and ominous cracks appeared in the beautiful facade of European Enlightenment and Emancipation. Startling eruptions of violent Anti-Semitism occurred, at one time or another, in nearly every country of Western Europe. Medievalism raised its ugly head over and over again, either as a Magyar blood libel or a Germanic literary pogrom or a Gaelic 'cause celebre' or an outright Slavic slaughter of Jews. The rains sadly disfigured the wall "daubed with whited plaster", and the foundations thereof were uncovered....

Some Jews were quick to read these warning signs. They returned to their faith and their people as if to a shelter from a gathering storm. Others, however, persisted in their hypnosis, discounted these evidences of an underlying menace and blithely proceeded on their way. In the generation before the World War, Judaism in Western Europe touched bottom, and it languished also among vast sections of Jewry in the United States.

Then came the World War which unleashed all the furies. Who can number the high hopes of mankind which perished upon its battlefields? What was apparently won, was actually sunk and lost in their bloody bogs - freedom, democracy, the self-determination of peoples, the rights of minorities and the vision of an international order based upon law, justice and peace. Out of the ten million graves of the needlessly slain, there arose the dread ghosts of hatred, of national and racial passions, of arrogance and vindictiveness, of wide-spread want and bitter class struggle, and of a dread stampede towards force, violence and terror as life's sole technique. These ghosts are dancing today their "danse macabre" in the hearts of men and nations. Civilization is plunging into darkness and chaos. A paganism far more crass and cruel than that of antiquity is engulfing the whole Western World.

For the Jewish people, the World War and its aftermath spelled Golgotha! A quarter of a century of mounting disasters and calamities culminating in the unprecedented horrors of recent months. Great Jewish communities, rich in history, culture and achievement, among whom the dream of a free, enlightened and tolerant humanity was most ardently cherished, have been plunged into Hell. Gone for them are Enlightenment and Emancipation. Gone are the dreams of human brotherhood and equality. Gone are the beckoning horizons of great careers and great service. Gone are all shelter and all security. Gone, even, the scant and tenuous security of the ghetto! Into exile, broken, stripped and impoverished, they must go, even as their forefathers before them, who knew neither Enlightenment

nor Emancipation. From countries and homes where they had known dignity, honor, power and wealth, Jews, in their mounting legions, must now wander forth, bewildered and disillusioned into a bewildered and disillusioned world.

For the world, generally, stands today bewildered and disillusioned. The strong and sure foundations upon which it had builded its life have been rudely shaken. That high optimism which fed upon truly remarkable achievements in every scientific field has vanished. Marvelous had been the vistas which opened up before the eyes of men in the preceding century. Men could dream then and men did dream, unabashed, of a glorious and uninterrupted progress for mankind, of an unending conquest of nature, and of building, in a world of abundance, a civilization free from all poverty, ignorance and war. "In the nineteenth century", wrote Victor Hugo, war will be dead, the scaffold will be dead, hatred will be dead, frontiers will be dead, royalty will be dead, dogmas will be dead, man will begin to live!" But here we are in the twentieth century, and war is not dead, the scaffold is not dead, hatred is not dead, frontiers are not dead, royalty is not dead, dogmas are not dead, and man is beginning to die. The vista which stretches before our generation today ends at the edge of a wilderness. For twenty-five years now, men have lived in a world of mounting hate, intolerance, and bigotry, of revolutions, invasions, wars, of the rise and fall of empires, and amidst the slaughter of millions of their kind. Great peoples have destroyed their liberties and enslaved themselves. Millions of men cower today in terrorized submissiveness. The wealth of nations is being drained in preparation for wars which will also drain the lives of their people. The mind of man, trained and sharpened by generations of scientific education, is now applied to the perfection of the war technique. So that the discoveries which science records in our day in such great numbers no longer fill the hearts of men with pride or enthusiasm. They suspect that these things will not contribute either to their happiness or security, or to greater decency in the world. The human spirit stands today frightened, weighted down with apocalyptic foreboding, as if awaiting the crash of doom.

The thoughtful among men have accordingly begun to search earnestly for some way of salvation - a road away from disaster. They are seeking desperately hard to rediscover that vision which was somehow lost amidst the brilliant pageantry of scientific achievement in the last century, to the hurt and sorrow

of the world. They understand now what the wise men of the earth have always known: that increased knowledge does not necessarily mean increased goodness or happiness, that facts are not in themselves blessings, that "truth can make us mad as well as free", that the prolongation of human life is not the same as the improvement of human life, that the acceleration of a process does not always insure a finer product and that change does not necessarily spell progress. They realize now that the fault is not with science or education or democracy, as such, but with the interpretation which men put on them, with the omnipotence and autonomy which they ascribed to them, and with their failure to understand that science, education and democracy are means and not ends in themselves.

What has been tragically missing in our civilization has been the compelling and coordinating belief in the great human goals which religion, and religion alone, has set for mankind, and towards the attainment of which science, education and democracy must contribute, if they are to fulfil their sole function. Mankind lost sight of these goals. Therefore human ^{progress} peoples today has no clear direction. Good material and good tools are not enough for the builder. He must have a plan. To build a noble and enduring society, it is not enough to have wealth and intellect. Mankind must be possessed of the architectural plan, which the spiritual vision of man designed, and it must have the will and loyalty to follow that plan. That only the moral sense of man can provide. Without faith in God, the reality of spiritual vision as well as the sanctions of morality are quickly denied and rejected in the world.

Mankind's way of salvation is the way which leads back or forward to God.

In the same way, and even more earnestly, are thoughtful Jews reaching out today for the religious vision of Jewish life. For ours is a double measure of disillusionment and a double measure of misfortune. More than any other people do we require today the everlasting arms of a great religious conviction to sustain us.

To the thoughtful Jews it is becoming increasingly clear that there are no substitutes in Jewish life for religion. Neither philanthropy nor culture nor nationalism is adequate for the stress and challenge of our lives. All these interests can and must find their rightful place within the generous pattern of Judaism. But the pattern must be Judaism, the Judaism of the Torah, the synagogue and the prayer book, the Judaism of the priest, the prophet, the saint, the mystic and the rabbi, the Judaism which speaks of God, and the worship of God, and the commandments of God and the quest of God. // Most eloquently did Moses Hayyim Luzzatto, in his "Misillat Yesharim" - the Path of the Upright - define Judaism in terms to which every classic teacher of Israel, I am sure, ^{would} have subscribed:

"We thus see that the chief function of man in this world is to keep the commandments, to worship God, and to withstand trial. The pleasures of this world should be only the means of affording that contentment and serenity which enables man to apply his mind to the fulfillment of the task before him. All of man's strivings should be directed toward the Creator, blessed be He. A man should have no other purpose in whatever he does, be it great or small, than to draw nigh to God and to break down all separating walls, that is, all things of a material nature, between himself and his Master, so that he may be drawn to God as iron to a magnet. He should pursue everything that might prove helpful to such nearness, and avoid everything that is liable to prevent it, as he would avoid fire. In the words of the Psalmist, 'My soul cleaveth to Thee; Thy right hand upholdeth me fast' (Ps. 63.9). Since man came into the world only for the end of achieving nearness to God, he should prevent his soul from being held captive by the things which hinder the realization of that end."

Our leaders would do well to understand this. Our people, and more especially our youth, require, now that Jewish life is entering again ^{upon} an age of persecution and martyrdom, more than the example of generosity towards our unfortunate brothers overseas, and more than the example of a

valiant defense of Jewish rights at home. They require the example of the practice of Judaism, as Luzzatto defined it; "to keep the commandments, to worship God and to withstand trial" - the example of religious discipline, piety and sacrificial loyalty. These leaders must help us to rebuild our inner world, now that our outer world is beginning to crumble again. (p. 10)

There have been many false prophets of "ersatz" Judaism in our midst who have frequently misled our people. There were those professional social-workers who announced that a full complement of scientifically administered hospitals and orphanages and other social agencies was a sufficient "vade macum" for the Jewish people, and that the synagogue and the religious school were quite unnecessary. At best they were to be tolerated only as a concession to those who still take such things seriously, and in order not to create unpleasant friction in the community. Such social-workers had many ready adherents among our would-be assimilated and rich Jews.

There were certain Jewish educators who resented the intrusion of religion in their ultra-scientific curricula. Judaism, they said, was not a religion, but a way of life - that is to say, their way of life, which of course, was non-religious or anti-religious. Jewish educators should, therefore, not be religious at all, only nationalistic and linguistic. At best the religious note might be smuggled in, but only as a concession to old-timers and cranks who don't know any better.

There were those Jewish spokesmen who offered Jewish nationalism as a substitute for Judaism, forgetting nationalism as such, unredeemed by a moral vision and responsibility, has sadly fragmentized our world, provincialized its peoples and is driving nations madly from one disaster to another; forgetting, further, that there is a widely-felt and widely answered need for religion and religious institutions even among peoples, whose national life is already fully established in their own lands and who are possessed of a rich national culture. Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah felt the need to preach religion - God and obedience to God's moral law - to their people even though they were established as a nation in their own land and spoke their own language. It is not possible to brush aside the spiritual needs of Jews in the diaspora, and their problems of survival as Jews in lands outside of

Palestine, where most Jews will continue to live, merely by talking long, loud and enticingly about Palestine. The upbuilding of a Jewish national home in Palestine is one great, ^{urgent} ~~imperious~~ and historically inescapable task of Jewry. The upbuilding of Jewish religious life in America and elsewhere throughout the world, inclusive of Palestine, is another. One is no substitute for the other. One is not opposed to the other.

Again there were other Jews who advised their people that Judaism can well be laid aside, ~~not~~ that the proletarian Messiah has already appeared in the land of the Slav, riding upon a droschko^y, and the Kingdom of Heaven was near at hand.

All these false prophets have had their clamorous hour among us. But their hour is over. Thoughtful Jews are turning to the sure and classic highways of Jewish life and thought. We are not likely to be beguiled again, at least the men of this generation, by these prophets and their alien teachings.

Humanity has sickened of its Godless civilization. Because the spiritual interpretation of human destiny was allowed to languish, other interpretations have come to life and are now driving mankind mad. For when God is dethroned, his throne does not remain vacant for long. Some false god, some Wotan, ^{Mammon} ~~Moloch~~ or Mars ^{soon} occupies it. Because the ideal of the ^{imitation} of God was banished from the hearts of men, the imitation of some ~~satan~~ is now the ideal. In place of piety, reverence, humility, compassion, self-sacrifice, other qualities - insolence, cruelty, aggression and combativeness are ~~now~~ extolled. Because men have rejected the ideal of the sanctification of human life under God, they now have a world in which human life is cheap, in which the stature of the individual has been reduced, his rights usurped by the state, his labor a commodity and his life ^{just} ~~only~~ a statistical item. Because the world rejected ~~God~~ God, it rejected also ^{Man} ~~the concept of man~~ as ^{fashioned} formed in the image of God, possessed of a sacred and inviolable personality, endowed by His Creator with

certain inalienable rights. Because men have ignored the sovereignty of God's moral Law, they have a world in which men, parties and governments have set themselves up above all law. Where there is no longer the Law of God, there ensues the law of ^{the} Duce, ^{the} Feuhrer, or ^{the} Commissar before which all men must tremble.

Now that lights are going out everywhere in the world, men ~~see the~~ ^{are turning} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~for~~ the Light of God.

Jews can do no less. ^{Jews} will do no less. I sense an incoming tide of faith among our people, a faith charged in some instances with deep mysticism. It ^{should} ~~would~~ not surprise us and it would be in keeping with similar moments in our past history, if our age should witness a strong mystic movement among our people. Such mystic movements followed the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal at the close of the 15th century and the appalling disasters which overtook Polish Jewry in the 17th century. ^{present-days} The ~~expulsions~~ of the Jews from Germany and Austria, the dismal plight of Jews throughout Eastern Europe, ~~and~~ the stress under which Israel finds itself everywhere, coupled with the distressed mood of mankind generally, may give rise to a strong mystic movement ~~among our people~~, which will express itself in religion, literature and art and in personal habits of thought and conduct.

In a sense, the problem of the survival of Judaism is much simpler in our day than at any time in the past. Our leaders need no longer expend the energy which was expended during the last century to persuade Jews to remain Jews. The doors of escape from ^Jewish destiny have been shut. The choice confronting intelligent Jews today is a very simple one. They have realized that God has not placed the shears of destiny - to be, or not to be - in their hands. Forces which they have not summoned are driving all would-be escapists back upon their

people. Somehow there has always been an element of unavoidable compulsion ^{of the inevitable} in Jewish ^{experience} ~~life~~. It is the "Ba'al Korcha" element, the quality of shunless destiny. It was under such compulsion, the Rabbis declared, that our forefathers accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai.... "And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all; in that ye say: "We will be as the nations, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone. As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out, will I be king over you.... And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bonds of the covenant."

The choice today is not between survival and extinction, but between doom and destiny, between burden and mission. Shall we live our Jewish lives greatly or meanly? Shall Jews walk "darkling to their doom" or advance confidently and exultingly to their destiny along the eternal road which stretches from Ur of the Chaldees to the distant messianic lands of "Acharit Ha-yamim"? Shall we quarrel with our fate and beat helpless hands against the unyielding bars of circumstances or shall we, ^{remembering that "stone walls do not a prison make"} by a miracle of faith, cease to be the unwilling prisoners of circumstance, and in the service of God, ^{and of in man,} the God, become magnificently free? ^{1057 1327 117 326} "The slave of God- he alone is truly free." Our choice today is between the "Ol Malkut" and the "Ol Malkut Shamayim" - between the yoke of earthly kingdoms, which is grievously hard to bear, and the yoke of the Kingdom of God, which makes all other yokes easy to bear.

What hands shall weave the loom of our future years? Our own hands, tender and skillful, drawing the golden strands from our own treasures of wisdom, piety, passion and dreams, which all the goodly folk from Abraham to our own day ^{have} stored for us, or shall alien hands, rude and unsympathetic, weave the web of the destiny of ourselves and our children?

Now that many doors are closing, should we not open wide to our children the doors leading to the treasure-troves of their own people's spiritual and

intellectual wealth, for their future sustenance, inspiration, solace and pride? The days ahead will be hard days for them, ^{the} until the world completes ~~its~~ latest stage in ^{its} economic transforamtion and ^{after a long, violent period of readjustment} steadies itself again, Jews, because they are everywhere an exposed minority, easily blamed and easily victimized, will be hammered on the anvil of every world event. The days ahead will be hard ~~times~~ ^{days} for our children, but they need not be ignoble or unrewarding days. Give them their total heritage - the copious bounty of Judaism - the Torah, the synagogue, the prayer-book, the noble literature and the beautiful language of their people. Give them the millennial companionship of their kinsmen and their kinsmen's ^{and they will, matched with their great hour} heroic faith and dreams and their matchless saga. They will then come to understand what it is in our heritage that has kept us alive; what it is that laid waste the paganism of the ancient world and now finds itself again in mortal combat with another paganism which it is also destined to destroy; what it is that makes their people the brunt of attack whenever privilege, power and reaction make a major onslaught on the precious hopes of mankind, and why the ancient ideals of their people are forever the battle-cries of up-struggling humanity. They will then come to understand that it is not because we are weak or unworthy that barbarous governments have vowed to destroy us, but because we are strong, and they fear us. Not us, but the faith which is in us, the torch which is in our hearts and the passion which is in our blood for the prophetic mandates of our Jewish heritage, for justice, freedom, brotherhood and peace, for the vision of ^{City} ~~Metropolis~~ of Faith, in place of the ^{City} ~~Metropolis~~ of Blood, built upon the pride of blood and upon glory drenched in the blood of the conquered; the despoiled and the slain, ^{for that is the} ~~in a word, for the greatness of morals as against the morals of great-~~ ^{ness.} These reckless adventurers of Power, who have put all ethics, all science and all religion in the service of a design for Power, who have made ^{all} of ethics

repeated

relative to tribal temperament and national interests and only Power, absolute, who have forced upon civilian life the discipline, the dumb obedience, the drill, the barrack room, the court martial, the censor, the espionage system, the whole code, complex and outlook of the military, and, by so doing, have destroyed civilian life completely, these present-day heirs of the tradition of Ishmael - the "Pere Adam", the Wild Man, "whose hand is against every man and every man's hand is against him", these heirs of the traditions of Esau, the Hairy Man, the "Ish Tzayid", who sees life only as the hunter sees the hunted, and who delights "to live by his sword", ~~these abhor and dread the tradition of Jacob, delights "to live by his sword"~~, - these abhor and dread the tradition of Jacob, the "Ish Tam," the man seeking perfection through rational and moral pursuits, "Yoshev Ohalim", content to live in the peaceful tents of work and study, devoted to the greatness of morals instead of the morals of greatness....

And understanding this - and understanding further that they must now become the active trustees of this classic tradition of civilization - they will, along with all other men/^{of}good will, feel themselves challenged. They will not be ashamed or cast down. They will face their world without fear or apology. They will not seek the world's approval - only God's. They will not be afraid of hostile voices - only of their own voice when silenced in fear. The insolence and naked impudicity of the heathens who rage will never humiliate them, only their own apostasy, back-sliding and fear. They will try to be worthy of their great hour of testing!

For each young heart will say: ^II stood with Abraham in his lonely vigil and read the destiny of my people in the stars. With Isaac I built the altar of a patriarch's stern faith and ultimate sacrifice. At Jabbok's ford I learned to wrestle thru the night with the dark angel of despair and to wrest a blessing at the break of dawn. With Joseph I dreamt the dream of sheaves and stars and climbed the steps from a dungeon's pit to a prince's throne. I wandered with Moses, an alien prince among an alien people. Unshod, I knelt with him before a vision in the wilderness,

and from within the inextinguishable fires of God I heard the inexorable Voice summoning to duty and freedom. I saw the lightnings and the clouds, and heard the thunder roll around Mt. Sinai, and witnessed the everlasting covenant between my people and its God. I learned how to suffer and hunger in long and weary marches to reach a promised land. I was with Joshua fighting at Gideon, and with Deborah by the waters of Megiddo, when the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. I stood with the blind Samson in his agony, and heard the wild cry of his desperate courage as he pulled down the temple over the Phillistines. I heard Samuel admonish his people to remain free, and not to reject God by enslaving themselves to a king. I listened to the harp of the shepherd king, David, and saw the great king cowering before the righteous wrath of the prophet, and bowing in contrition before the majesty of the overarching Law of God. I prayed with Solomon in the Temple which he dedicated as a House of Prayer for all peoples, and I learned of a God Whom Heaven, and the Heaven of Heavens, cannot contain, and Whose compassion extendeth to all, even to the stranger who cometh out of a far country.

I marched with the resolute band of the prophets who came to destroy old worlds and to build new ones. I shuddered at the wrath of their spirit as they lashed out against oppression and injustice, against false Gods and gilded idols, against blind leaders and lying prophets. I warmed at their infinite compassion for the weak, the denied, and the wronged. From them I learned the nature of Mission and what a raging fire within one's bosom and unfulfilled ^{mandate} commission of God may become.

I wandered with my people by the slow-moving rivers of Babylon, and I heard their oath of deathless loyalty "If I forget Thee, O Jerusalem, ^{may} my right hand forget her cunning". I entered their humble and improvised synagogues, and I discovered that prayer and devout study are beautiful, and as acceptable to God as the sacrifices of the priests in the Temple, and the songs of the Levites.

I returned from captivity, and standing with those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, I learned how a people can build upon ruins. I sat with the sages and scribes

who piously taught and interpreted the word of God, and molded a people's reverence for its spirit enshrined in a timeless Book. I moved among the mountains of Judea, pulling down the heathen altars, with the lion-hearted sons of the Maccabees. I saw the miracle of a single cruse of spiritual oil inexhaustibly illumine the rededicated temple of their faith. I was the companion of the gentle Hillel who revealed to me the whole of the Law in the single kernel of neighborly love; and of Akiba who knew how to inspire a revolution, defy an empire and die a martyr.

And then into the long dark exile I wandered with my people, into many lands over which cross and crescent reigned, and I walked with them ^{the} weary highways of the world. I was with them when they drank deep out of the bitter chalice of pain, humiliation, cruelty, and hate. But never did I fail to sense the stress of their imperious vision, their pride of a great past, their hope of a greater future, their superb courage, their unflinching faith. Philosophers, poets and saints never failed them in the lands of their dispersion, and the light of their Torah was never extinguished.

And then I saw the night lift and the dawn break; and into a reborn world, drenched with a new light of freedom and justice, I marched with them exaltingly. I heard the shackles fall from off their limbs. I saw the radiance of their emancipated minds and hearts. I beheld them, mounting as on eagles' wings, rising to bless the world with matchless gifts of heart and mind in every field of human creation.

And now I see the night descend again, and into the dark and the storm my people are wandering forth again. Shall I leave them now? Can I leave them now? Shall I part company with this immortal band? They have become too dear and precious to me. The urgency of their pilgrimage is now coursing thru my own blood too. Their beckoning shrine is now the shrine of my quest also. Like unto the first pilgrim, out of Ur of the Chaldees, I, too, seized by the hand of God, am listening to the Divine summons: "Get thee out of thy country,...and from thy father's house, unto a land which I will show thee...and I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing..."