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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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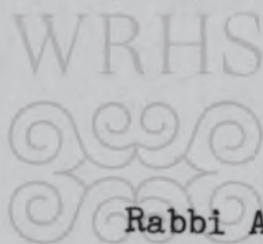
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The Triumph of the Wicked is Short, 1939.

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THE TRIUMPH OF THE WICKED IS SHORT  
A Purim Sermon



By  
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At  
The Temple

On  
Sunday, March 5, 1939



It is remarkable friends, is it not, that a people which has gone through so much, like the people of Israel, to come up smiling. One of the reasons for it is that in its life, it has always had symbols like the Festival of Purim to remind him "That the triumph of the wicked is but short, and the mirth of the ungodly is but for a moment."

It was ordained, you read in the Megillah this morning, that this Festival of Purim shall never cease to be remembered among the Jews. It is to remind the Jews that one ought never despair when affliction comes upon them. "Do not despair of affliction when what seems to be disaster overtakes you."

In ancient days, the Jews of Persia faced doom, seemingly inescapable doom. The decree had been issued. The day had been set. The entire apparatus of a great government had been set in motion to destroy all the Jews of the entire vast empire of ancient Persia. But, and this has been the recurring "but" in our history, that day, like so many other days before then and since then was turned for our people, as the Megillah says, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to a good day. The heathen raged against God, against his annointed. "He Who dwells in the heavens laughs". And we, too, are justified in laughing, laughing confidently against our enemies like Haman rise from time to time and seek our total destruction. We can laugh, we do laugh, sometimes we laugh through our tears. We are warranted and justified in laughing because we know that the days of these tormentors of our people is short and strangely enough, that our tormentors, our would-be destroyers also know that their day is short.

maintaining themselves  
The enemies of Israel today now/in power through terror, through espionage and suppression, they know that their day is short. People who are confident, convinced of their strength and of their stability, do not have to resort to such desperate measures for selfpreservation. You may laugh



when you see just what these would be destroyers of our people are achieving. In order to expel the Jews whom they regard as their mortal foes, they have been compelled to enslave their own people. In order to rob the Jews of their possessions, they have been compelled to impoverish their own people. They have destroyed their own national economy in their blind anger against the Jewish group. And now they cry that they must export or die and they have realized they cannot export and must die. They have built a tree upon which to hang descendants of Mordecai and upon that tree, they will hang themselves.

It is perhaps a bit too early to complete the picture which was definitely and completely finished in the case of Haman on the 13th day of Adar a long time ago. But the picture will not fail to be completed. There is really very little new in the relationship in the outside world with the people of Israel through the ages. The Jews of the 4th, fifth centuries before the Common Era found themselves in similar position everywhere as the Jews today - a peaceful, law-abiding minority which carries on undisturbed its quiet way in life. But the unscrupulous schemer, the man anxious for power, prestige, then as now tried to gain it by exploiting the position of the minority group. So Haman, then, as his descendants today, singled out this ~~xxx~~ minority people living at peace with their neighbors, singled them out and pinned upon them the crime of being a differing people and therefore a hostile group. Their customs are different from other people's. They do not obey the laws of the king. Destroy them, O great King, and you will enrich the world.

It is all very familiar, isn't it? It is all so modern, and sounds so modern. Do not for a moment assume that this trick of exploiting minorities is personal, that it was only against the Jews. We Jews frequently



fall into that mistake. We begin to apologize for ourselves. There must be some reason why we, of all people, are singled out for that fate. Of course that is not true. Anyone who knows history knows that that has not been the case. Anyone who knows history knows that it has been the universal practice of the world to use minorities regardless of race or religion as a means of attaining their objectives.

Of course the classic example are the Christians. In the early centuries, the Christians were a minority, a minority which differed in religion from the rest. Their practices and ways of life, their attitude to government was not the attitude of the rest. This was seized upon by their enemies. They were called bad citizens, disloyal enemies of the State, atheists. Tacitus said this of the Christians of that day: And as I read it to you, keep in mind what is being said of the Jews in certain parts of the world. Tacitus relates that Nero "falsely charged with the guilt and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius; but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow, from all quarters, as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged. Accordingly, first those were seized who confessed they were Christians; next, on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of hating the human race. And in their deaths they were also made the subjects of sport, for they were covered with the hides of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire to, and when day declined burnt to serve for nocturnal lights."



Two centuries later, when Rome had already become officially Christian, when disasters overtook Rome, the great Church Father, Augustine, found it necessary in his monumental work to defend the Christians and say that all the misfortunes which had come upon Rome were due to the fact that the Romans dared to worship <sup>the</sup> oriental gods instead of their own gods. All you need to do is to substitute the word "Nazis" for "Roman", and "Jews" for "Christians" and ancient history becomes present-day narrative.

So that you need not worry about the reason why the Jews are singled out for persecution. The thought that occurs to me whenever Purim comes around is not the fact that so many people in the past persecuted the Jews, but that so many people have tried in the past to become the successors of Israel. Very early the Christians, for example endeavored to establish the thesis that they were the true descendants of Abraham. In a very interesting dialogue between Justin and the Jew, Trypho, this thought is stressed over and over again: "For the true spiritual Israel, and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac and Abraham are we who have been led to God thru this crucified Christ." And again "As therefore Christ is the Israel and the Jacob, even so we, who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ, are the true Israelite race." If you look up your Webster's Dictionary, under the term Israel, among numerous other meanings is also "Christian".

You know, of course, that in the Anglo-Saxon world, there is still a great movement known as the Anglo-Israelitism which has two million followers. A belief of the group is that the English people are descendants of the lost ten tribes of Israel. They have quite a literature, quite a number of periodicals which aim to prove this thesis.

The Puritans sought to identify their history with the history of



of the Jews of Judea. The historian Macaulay says "They baptized their children by the names, not of Christian saints but of Hebrew patriarchs and warriors."

Recently I read a rather interesting book called "Days of our Years" by Pierre Van Passen who is a Dutchman. In recounting his early life, he writes that his folks belonged to a reform sect in Holland which closely sought to link itself up with Israel. He writes: "This exclusive character attributed to the nation (Dutch) led inevitably to comparisons with the early history of the Jewish people, whose sacred books had served as the foundation stone of the Dutch Republic. We were the spiritual succession of the chosen Race."

Why is all this? Why were people's destiny, removed from ancient Judea in point of space and time, why have they through the ages sought to become successors of Israel, or weave the pattern of their lives around the pattern of the lives of the Jewish people? If <sup>we</sup> were such a suffering people throughout the Middle Ages, denied, despised, crowded into filthy ghettos, people should have sought to remove themselves as far as possible from any contact with the lives, spiritual or physical, of this people. Yet the reverse is true. Why? Well, the reason is not hard to see. Those people, in moments of spiritual insight, understood that Israel represented the heart of spiritual civilization.

There is an interesting saying of one of our Rabbis: "If a man will say to you - there is wisdom, there knowledge, there is science among the heathen, believe it. If they say that there is Torah, the whole complex of ideas represented in the Torah, the spiritual interpretation, the concept of moral divinity, if people tell you that there is Torah among the heathen, do not believe it." You do not find among the ancient people, in spite of



their remarkable achievements in philosophy, in art, in ancient sciences, in politics, you do not find among them what you find exclusively among this little people of Israel - prophetic religion, the concept of the immortality of God, the concept of holiness. We set up the ideal of a God who was a father of orphans, who protects the weak, humble, dispossessed of the earth. Men were cautioned to imitate God and fashion their lives according to that pattern. The ancient world knew very little of pity and compassion. Judaism proclaims that he who has the power should be the savior of men and should help those who are less fortunate than he.

No one fared any worse in the ancient world than the slave. Slaves possessed no rights at all. Their very lives depended upon the whim and will of their masters. This amazing statement of the Rabbis is indicative of the attitude which should be taken: "A man who buys a slave, buys a master of himself. If there is only one couch in the room, it isn't the master who lies on the couch. It is the slave..." Perhaps this extreme example was frequently sought by the Rabbis in an effort to drive home a point. Just as they insisted that in order to help a poor man properly so as to acquire a mitzvah, it is of no consequence to throw him a pittance. If you want to serve that poor man, you should restore him to the position which he occupied formerly. It is this way of thinking that was different.

Perhaps that is what Haman meant when he said to the king: "Their customs are different from all other people's". He thinks of them in terms of differences of religion, between men and men. That is perhaps what he sensed in Mordecai who would not kneel down and prostrate himself before him. Now Mordecai was not insolent and not without respect. Haman saw in Mordecai a spiritual independence which ran counter to everything he was striving for. Therefore he hated him and sought to destroy not only him, but his people, too.



Back of Nazism in Germany today is a hatred of the ideas which the Jewish tradition, and through derivation, the Christian tradition also represent in the modern world. The Jews of Germany do not represent the ideas which the Nazis represent. There is a world apart. They belong to a different world. They think in different terms than the Nazis. To the Nazis, the Jews and the Christians represent the enemies of Society because they are the enemies of the ideas the Nazis represent - hate, world conquest, brute force, the suppression of the individual. This, my friends, the fact that we do represent a set of codes, of thought and action which are the heart of civilization, which great peoples have fought to link up with through the ages, that represents our invincibility. That is our strength. "Not by might, power, but by My spirit", saith the Lord.

I came across an interesting statement recently written by Professor Albert Einstein. He makes this very interesting, very penetrating observation.

"Being a lover of freedom, when the revolution came in Germany, I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but no, the universities immediately were silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers whose flaming editorials in days gone by had proclaimed their love of freedom; but they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks. Then I looked to the individual writers, who, as literary guides of Germany, had written much and often concerning the place of freedom in modern life; but they, too were mute. Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing truth. I never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly."



There is only one way, my friends by which tyranny, dictatorship can be fought in the modern world - that is by the spirit of man, by the spirit represented in religion, in the church, in The Temple, in the synagogue.

What is the message, then of Purim, my friends? It is one of hope, one of courage. "When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them; for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

"And it shall be, when ye are come high unto the battle, that the priest shall approach, and speak unto the people.

"And shall say unto them, Hear O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies; let not your hearts be faint; fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them.

"For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you."

No war is won, my friends in the first battle. It is the last battle which counts. Many Jews have become panicky and frightened because of the cruelty of their fate, because they have suffered so many defeats. The war is not over. The man who is weak and afraid, let him stay home, lest he infect his brethren. This is a time for Jews, for all lovers of freedom and justice in the world to evidence that insurmountable faith in the ultimate triumph of ~~king~~ truth which revives the great faith in God.

Let us celebrate Purim in joy, laughter, in feasts, confidence.

"The day of sorrow will turn to a day of gladness, and the day of mourning to a day of ."



1/ Message of Hope -

ואם הכורים האלה לא יצאו מן הגלות  
ישיבם לא יסוף מן העולם -

אלוהים בן יצחק בן אברהם - Doom decreed - 13 Adar - often -  
- הנחת תליו -

"Do you (Jude) -

Heaven rage - against God this avowed? אלהים

We, too, should laugh! 'derision & defiance'

We know - their day is short. They know it, too,

maintain us in power - frightens & frightening  
espionage - Terror - Purges -

To expel Jews - enslaved their people

To rob Jews - understand imprisoned, their anxiety

Must expect to die - Boycott -

Burn Tree - hang us on it.

2/ Jews were ~~persecuted~~ in a minority in Persia as today  
as easy then as now - for unscrupulous schemes -

'difference' - hostility -

Used against all minorities - Christians

bad citizens, disloyal, enemies, etc., Atheists.

Tacitus: (Jude)

Incendiarism, Blood libel - Canabaker - heinous <sup>most</sup> deeds

Augustine: "Disasters which visited Rome" - ceased to  
unshrink to our gods.

Testallian



3/ Had not try to change ourselves -

Fear us - Envy us

4/ Would like to be our successors -

Identify evr with our history.

Early ch. - Paul - Real descendants of Ah an men  
of faith - Hea then

"Didryne of Justin - Trypho" - (Jude)

"Israelite" - a real Christian -

"Anglo-Israelite" - 10 Tribes - 2 M. Coronation Stone

Puritans - name of O.T. (Jude)

Dutch - (Jude)



5/ Why? Heart! - רצון הלב -

Holiness - Purity - Moral food - Justice - Justice - חסד וחסד

6/ What Havan - hope - sensed & resented -

חלום נאמן - Mondecar - חלום נאמן

7/ That is our Inevitability! רצון הלב - (Jude)

8/ Conrage - (Jude) - was not won in first battle!  
last - which counts!



(a) Escape from Europe - Colonies / Minority Rights /

(b) Pabstine - set-backs - 1929.

האל הייט איך האט זיך (2) 1929  
זיך האט זיך 1929.





④ This exclusive character attributed to the nation (Dutch) led inevitably to comparisons with the early history of the Jewish people, whose sacred books had served as the foundation stone of the Dutch Republic. We were the spiritual successors, the chosen Race."

"Day of our Year"  
Piet van Rossum.

③ "For the true spiritual Israel, and descendants of Judah, Jacob, Isaac and Abraham... are we who have been led to God ~~this~~ through this crucified Christ."

(2C) <sup>early</sup> "Dialogue of Justice with  
Tyrphs". The Jew -

They recanted the when time -

③ "as... Christ is the Israel and the Jacob, even so we, who have been grafted out from the branches of Christ, are the true Israelite race."

① "Do you not know this as from of old,  
" Since man was placed upon earth,  
" That the triumph of the wicked is but short,  
" And the wrath of the angry is but for a moment"

① "They baptized their children by the names, not of the saints, but of Hebrew patriarchs and warriors". Macaulay. J Sh. 20 -



(3)  
When thou goest out to battle against  
thine enemies, and seest horses, and  
chariots and a people more than thou,  
be not afraid of them; for the Lord  
thy God is with thee, which brought  
thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And it shall be, when ye are come  
nigh unto the battle, that the priest  
shall approach, and speak unto the  
people.

And shall say unto them, Hear O  
Israel, ye approach this day unto  
battle against your enemies; let not  
your hearts be faint; fear not, and  
do not tremble, neither be ye terrified  
because of them.

For the Lord your God is he that  
goeth with you, to fight for you  
against your enemies, to save you.

And the officers shall speak further  
unto the people, and they shall say: What  
man is here that is fearful and faint hearted?  
Let him go and return unto his house,  
over



lest his brethren's heart faint as well  
as his heart.





1)

"Do you not know this as from of old,  
"Since man was placed upon earth,  
"That the triumph of the wicked is but short,  
"And the mirth of the ungodly is but for a moment."

Job 20

2)

Tacitus relates that Nero

"falsely charged with the guilt and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius; but the pernicious superstition, repressed for a time, broke out again, not only through Judea, where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow, from all quarters, as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged. Accordingly, first those were seized who confessed they were Christians; next, on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of hating the human race. And in their deaths they were also made the subjects of sport, for they were covered with the hides of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire to, and when day declined burnt to serve for nocturnal lights."

3) "For the true spiritual Israel, and descendants <sup>of</sup> Judah, Jacob, Isaac and Abraham...are we who have been led to God thru this crucified Christ."

"Dialogue of Justin with Trypho" the Jew

"As therefore Christ is the Israel and the Jacob, even so we, who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ, are the true Israelite race."

4b) "This exclusive character attributed to the nation (Dutch) led inevitably to comparisons with the early history of the Jewish people, whose sacred books had served as the foundation stone of the Dutch Republic. We were the spiritual succession of the chosen Race."

"Day of our Year"  
Pierre Van Paassen

4a) "They baptized their children by the names, not of Christian saints but of Hebrew patriarchs and warriors."

Macaulay



5)

When thou goeth out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them; for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach, and speak unto the people.

And shall say unto them, Hear O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies; let not your hearts be faint; fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them.

For the Lord your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.

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And the officers shall speak further unto the people and they shall say: What man is here that is fearful and faint-hearted? Let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethern's heart faint as well as his heart.





**ANNOUNCING!**  
**THE SISTERHOOD'S ANNUAL MOTHER-DAUGHTER DINNER**  
Tuesday evening, March 28th, in the  
Dining Hall of the Temple

Mrs. A. Landau, Chairman of Reservations, 2878 Mayfield Road,  
is taking reservations **now**. Reservations may also be made at the  
Temple office.

The price per plate is \$1.00. Checks must accompany reservations.  
**DO NOT MISS THIS GALA AFFAIR!**

**THE JEW MUST LIVE**

"We who value our civilization owe a tremendous debt to the Jews. In place of childish aggregations of gods mostly malevolent, in place of terrifying superstitions abated only for the elect by philosophy, they gave us religions of singular purity and splendor that yet could reach even the lowest minds. The book of history is not yet closed, and it may be fated that our present civilization of aerial bombs and poison gas must once more go through an era of mediaeval darkness. The Jews, however small a remnant, will manage to keep their lamps burning. Their mission has not come to an end. Indeed, one may say that even today, in the midst of the greatest of all persecutions, their mission stands out clearly: to awaken us from the stupor in which we dreamed that a civilized society might rest on some other basis than that which has been tested by time—good will to men"—  
Alvin Johnson, Atlantic Monthly.

**A JEW COMES TO CHURCH**

Being a lover of freedom, when the revolution came in Germany, I looked to the universities to defend it, knowing that they had always boasted of their devotion to the cause of truth; but no, the universities immediately were silenced. Then I looked to the great editors of the newspapers whose flaming editorials in days gone by had proclaimed their love of freedom; but they, like the universities, were silenced in a few short weeks. Then I looked to the individual writers, who, as literary guides of Germany, had written much and often concerning the place of freedom in modern life; but they, too were mute. Only the Church stood squarely across the path of Hitler's campaign for suppressing truth. I never had any special interest in the Church before, but now I feel a great affection and admiration because the Church alone has had the courage and persistence to stand for intellectual truth and moral freedom. I am forced to confess that what I once despised I now praise unreservedly.—Albert Einstein.

**FRIDAY NIGHT IS YOUR TEMPLE NIGHT**

For his sermon this Friday evening, Rabbi Rosenthal will lecture on "A Peculiar Treasure", the autobiography of Edna Ferber, popular novelist and playwright.

This is the story of a human being, of a Jew in America; the childhood, the young womanhood in the incredible pre-war years, the war, the aftermath that has brought mankind, and particularly Jewish mankind, to a bloody cross-roads. As an autobiography, as an American life, it is an important human record and an exciting narrative. But its overtones are far greater: "A Peculiar Treasure" is a powerful defense of democracy, the statement of a vital and honestly non-chauvinistic Americanism, and a passionate cry for freedom and tolerance.

Sabbath Services are conducted each Friday evening at 8:00 o'clock.  
Everyone is welcome.



## PURIM The Feast of Lots

Purim, the merriest festival of the Jewish religious year, will be ushered in at sundown next Saturday evening, March 4th.

The Jewish holiday, known in English as "The Feast of Lots", is a day which is marked by masquerades, parties, and an innocent hilarity, which is even permitted to penetrate into the synagogue during the traditional reading of the Biblical Book of Esther, whose story forms the background for the holiday.

According to the story, the 14th day of the Hebrew month, Adar, witnessed the triumph of the Jews over a Persian "anti-Semite" of the fourth century before the Christian era named Haman, who was prime minister in the court of King Ahasuerus in Susa. Every mention of his name in the reading of the special scroll containing the Book of Esther, is met by the whirl of noisemakers known as Hamandrehers.

This custom reveals the Jew's saving sense of humor which as much as anything else has permitted him to overcome trials and tribulations. For the whirling of the Hamandrehers is part of the merrymaking and carnival spirit of the holiday and is carried on without bitterness or malice toward the persecutor.

This is indicated too in the fact that Haman's name is given to special toothsome goodies associated with this holiday—they are known as "Hamantaschen", literally "Haman's pockets".

Another custom of the holiday is the sending of gifts to the poor, both Jew and Gentile.

The familiar story of Esther tells how the Persian Emperor Ahasuerus had chosen a beautiful Jewish maiden as his queen, and how her cousin, Mordecai, had won the favor of Ahasuerus. The king is tricked by his prime minister, Haman—who bears a grudge against Mordecai—into placing all Jews in his power.

Haman orders a general massacre to be carried out against the Jews, but Queen Esther upon the counsel of Mordecai, prepares a banquet for the king at which she reveals herself as a Jewess and denounces

the traitorous Haman. The king then orders Haman hung upon the very gibbet he had prepared for Mordecai.

The gaiety of Purim is associated with the memory of this deliverance from the hands of Haman. The story is retold each year, not alone in the reading of the Book Esther, but in plays and in pageants both serious and farcical.

## BOYCOTT NAZI GOODS I

### PARALLEL WISDOM

Chinese Proverb: Let your practice keep step with your knowledge.

The Talmud: Everyone whose deeds are more than his wisdom, his wisdom endures. And everyone whose wisdom is more than his deeds, his wisdom does not endure.

\* \* \*

Chinese Proverb: A single word keeps one warm for three winters.

The Bible: A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. (Prov. 25.11.)

\* \* \*

Chinese Proverb: Men are crushed to death under the tongue.

The Bible: Death and life are in the power of the tongue. (Prov. 18.21.)

\* \* \*

Chinese Proverb: Though stone were changed to gold, the heart of man would not be satisfied.

The Bible: The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. (Eccl. 1.8.)

\* \* \*

Chinese Proverb: At birth we bring nothing; at death we take away nothing.

The Bible: As he came forth from his mother's womb, naked, shall he go back as he came. (Eccl. 5.14.)—The Chinese Proverbs are quoted from H. H. Hart's 700 Chinese Proverbs.

## BEREAVED

We record with sorrow the passing of Joseph Friedman and George J. Yarus and extend to the bereaved families our sincere sympathy.

(Continued in Next Column)