



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

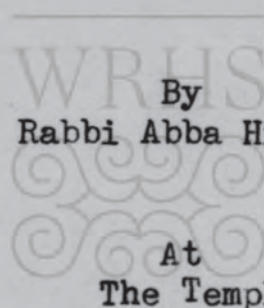
Box
56

Folder
585

Young Man, there is America! . . . , 1939.

532

"YOUNG MAN, THERE IS AMERICA!...."



By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple



On
Sunday morning, May 14, 1939

At the close of the 18th Century, Edmund Burke, one of the greatest political thinkers of his day, one of the great names of literature, who understood, perhaps better than any Britisher living at that time the temper of the American colonists - I say, at the close of the 18th Century, Edmund Burke wrote: "Young man, there is America -- which at this day serves for little more than to amuse you with stories of savage men and uncouth manners; yet shall, before you taste of death, show itself equal to the whole of that commerce which now attracts the envy of the world."

"Young man, there is America!..." His prophecy came true. He saw the thirteen colonies attract people from all parts of the world and attract the commerce from many parts of the world.

I am of the persuasion that in 1939 there is need for another Edmund Burke to sound again the call: "Young men, there is America!" The men of our day seem to think that America has seen its greatest hour, that its day of prosperity is gone and that it now faces some serious, almost catastrophic development. Even Edmund Burke could not, in his most luxuriant imagination foresee the miraculous development of those thirteen colonies which in his day broke away from their mother land.

If, therefore, my friends, we have economic difficulties today, if we have no assured prosperity for our people, if there are millions of unemployed in our midst, it is not due to the poverty of our land, the paucity of its resources, the niggardliness of its soil, it is due to our own stupidity, to our lack of wisdom and intelligence in the production and distribution of that nigh untold wealth which the good God placed in this country. But this lack of intelligence is not congenital. It is not fatal. The American mind quite as much as the American soil has remarkable resources of initiative, enterprise, daring, experimentation.

I foresee, and this is not wishful thinking, I foresee an even greater future for the American people than Edmund Burke foresaw more than a century ago. Someday we will solve the problem of intelligent distribution of this wealth which is produced and can be produced in this country. Someday we will solve the problem of giving work to everyone who wishes to work. Someday, when the world normalizes itself, when the suicidal policy of economic self-sufficiency is abandoned - when that time comes, American will resume its mighty stride into the future. The youth of America today is just as oppressed as the youth at the time of Edmund Burke with war and economic depression. Not only, however, will the youth move forward to great strength but spiritually as well.

Spiritually, the United States today is the most wholesome country in the world. That is said without chauvinism. One need but cast his eyes abroad and see what is going on there and by comparison see how truly wholesome, sane, sound and disciplined American life is today.

There appeared recently an editorial which summarizes so perfectly the ideas which run through the mind of thoughtful Americans today - this article written by R. G. Callvert of the Oregonian - that I should like

to read it to you.

"MY COUNTRY 'TIS OF THEE....

"In this land of ours, this America, the man we choose as leader dons at no time uniform or insignia to denote his constitutional position as Commander in Chief of armed forces. No member of his Cabinet, no civil subordinate, ever attires himself in garments significant of military power.

"In this land of ours, this America, the average citizen sees so little of the army that he has not learned to distinguish between a major and a lieutenant from his shoulder straps. When the Chief Executive addresses his fellow-countrymen, they gather about him within handclasp distance. Goose-stepping regiments are not paraded before him. When he speaks to the civilian population it is not over rank upon rank of helmeted heads.

"In this land of ours, this America, there is no tramp of military boots to entertain the visiting statesman. There is no effort to affright him with display of mobile cannon or of facility for mass production of aerial bombers.

"In this land of ours, this America, there is no fortification along the several thousand miles of the northern border. In the great fresh water seas that partly separate it from another dominion no naval craft piles the waters. Along its southern border there are no forts, no show of martial strength.

"In this land of ours, this America, no youth is conscripted to labor on defices of defense; military training he may take or leave at option. There is no armed force consistent with a policy of aggression. The navy is built against no menace from the Western Hemisphere, but wholly for defense against that which may threaten from Europe or Asia.

"In this land of ours, this America, one-third of the population is

foreign born or native born of foreign or mixed parentage. Our numerous 'minorities' come from fourteen nations. The native born, whatever his descent, has all political and other rights possessed by him who traces his ancestry to the founding fathers. The foreign born of races that are assimilable are admitted to all these privileges if they want them. We have 'minorities' but no minority problem.

'In this land of ours, this America, the common citizen may criticize without restraint the policies of his government or the aims of the Chief Executive. He may vote as his judgment or his conscience advises and not as a ruler dictates.

"In this land of ours, this America, our songs are dedicated to love and romance, the blue of the night, sails in the sunset, and not to might or to a martyrdom to political cause. Our national anthem has martial words; difficult air. But if you want to hear the organ roll give the people its companion - 'America..of thee I sing.' In lighter patriotism we are nationally cosmopolitan. Unitedly we sing of Dixie, or of Ioway, where the tall corn grows, of Springtime in the Rockies, or of California, here I come.

"In this land of ours, this America, there is not a bomb-proof shelter, and a gas mask is a ~~curious~~ curiosity. It is not needed that we teach our children where to run when deahawks darken the sky.

"In this land of ours, this America, our troubles present or prospective from come/within -- come from our own mistakes, and injure us alone. Our pledges of peace toward our neighbors are stronger than ruler's promise or written treaty. We guarantee them by devoting our resources, greater than the resources of any other nations, to upbuilding the industries of peace. We strut no armed might that could be ours. We cause no nation in our half of the world to fear us. None does fear us, nor arm against us.

Because of the composite nature of the American Colonies, it was from the very outset to insure freedom based not upon race or religion or nationality but freedom based upon the fundamental, indispensable inalienable human rights that a Bill of Rights was written into the Constitution one hundred fifty years ago which for all time, or for as long as the American people wished to remain faithful to the Constitution, insured the free exercise of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly for all people. The Founding Fathers one hundred fifty years ago understood the voracity, the insatiable appetite of American Government which could control more and more power over the rights of the people - we call it political totalitarianism - those who wrote the Bill of Rights understood it fully and voted definite limits to this appetite for power, how far it could go and how far it had no right to go. And in 1939, it is of utmost importance that these two ideas which represent the essence of the Bill of Rights, namely, the rights of the individual and the circumscribed rights of government shall again be proclaimed false.

Fortunately for America and fortunately for the future, is the fact that we are free from all forms of intolerance and that the American people, cannot at a moment of passion and panic be stampeded into one form or another of intolerance.

We have had movements of intolerance in this country, for example, against the Catholic and Irish. Both the Catholics and the Irish seem strangely enough to have forgotten that today. Monasteries were burned to the ground, etc. These poor Irish immigrants who were coming to ~~the~~ the United States by the boatload were discriminated against by the natives, themselves the children of immigrants. Fortunately these intolerances were never fostered, financed or condoned by our government as is the case in Nazi Germany and in Fascist Italy today, where the governments uses its press, school system, radio to foster and keep alive an artificial intolerance which would otherwise

spend itself. That is why these momentary expressions of intolerance in our country pass away. Our government neither condones nor fosters them. Because we are immigrants or the children of immigrants, because we have helped to make this America, we have come to the conviction, as Walt Whitman expressed it a long time ago in his great poem, "Democracy":

"Each of us inevitable
"Each of us limitless
"Each of us with his or her right upon the earth,
"Each of us here as divinely as any is here."

Any is here.

Each of us here. / Nobody has the right to tell anybody else to get off the earth. The right of anyone to live on the earth is dependent upon each other, each to enjoy the same right. That was the basic thought of American Democracy.

The great musical instruments - like the piano, the lyre do not have strings of the same length. Each string does not have the same tone. Quite the contrary! The very genius of those instruments is that they have strings of different lengths, different notes. It is the composite of it all that makes a creative piece of music. Each is inevitable. Each is necessary. Each here as divinely as any is here.

Therefore, my conviction is that our origins, in a sense, will determine our destiny. Our destiny, as I see it, is not merely to give well-being and prosperity to all who live upon this land, but to serve as a symbol, as a proof of this very thought which I have just indicated. What is important for us and for those of tomorrow is not to permit ourselves to be swept off our feet by the hysteria of the hour. What is important is that we should not lose faith, either in the strength and future of America and in the inherent soundness and validity of life and the American way of life. What is important in these critical times, is to preserve our liberty. And the best way to

✓ preserve it is not in a negative fight against Fascism and Nazism but in a positive fight for democracy. That way is the way of establishing economic justice, economic security, a sense of well-being for our people. That is a task which is not impossible. It is a task not beyond the American people to ✓ accomplish. It is not enough to defend America by defending the status quo. The way to defend democracy is to keep on defending and agitating and advertising democracy and greater freedom. Those who brand every important suggestion for improving or ameliorating the economic life of our people with some malodorous term such as Bolshevism or Communism and thereby hope to check economic progress in the United States, are not the friends ✓ of democracy. They are its enemies, only those are the enemies of democracy who want to achieve any progress of whatever nature by the sacrifice of the democratic procedure, the democratic apparatus. Whether they come from the Right or the Left is immaterial. Those who pay no respect to the democratic ✓ apparatus, technique, who fight to achieve some goal quickly - those are the enemies of democracy., not those who try to achieve them by means of basic government and democratic procedure. What Abraham Lincoln said during the bleak and tragic hour of the Civil War is true today. "It is for us, the living to be dedicated to the unfinished work." It is for you, the living, particularly ✓ you, the youth of America, to dedicate yourselves to the unfinished work of building an even finer and stronger American democracy.

✓ "Young man, there is America!Young man, in your hour of fear or doubt, because of all that is about you in the world today, there is America! There still is the foundation of our government. The statue of liberty has not toppled over. This is a going concern, still strong, vital and young. There is America. People overseas, by the millions today are being trampled under foot and are trembling in the dark. But there still

is America, the symbol, the proof that liberty, freedom and tolerance and good will can survive, and that they have not banished from the face of the earth.



The text of the editorial that won a Pulitzer prize for R. G. Callvert of The Portland (Ore.) Oregonian, as it appeared in The Portland Sunday Oregonian of Oct. 2, 1938, follows:

MY COUNTRY 'TIS OF THEE....

In this land of ours, this America, the man we choose as leader dons at no time uniform or insignia to denote his constitutional position as Commander in Chief of armed forces. No member of his Cabinet, no civil subordinate, ever attires himself in garments significant of military power.

In this land of ours, this America, the average citizen sees so little of the army that he has not learned to distinguish between a major and a lieutenant from his shoulder straps. When the Chief Executive addresses his fellow-countrymen they gather about him within handclasp distance. Goose-stepping regiments are not paraded before him. When he speaks to the civilian population it is not over rank upon rank of helmeted heads.

In this land of ours, this America, there is no tramp of military boots to entertain the visiting statesman. There is no effort to affright him with display of mobile cannon or of facility for mass production of aerial bombers.

In this land of ours, this America, there is no fortification along the several thousand miles of the northern border. In the great fresh water seas that partly separate it from another dominion no naval craft piles the waters. Along its southern border there are no forts, no show of martial strength.

In this land of ours, this America, no youth is conscripted to labor on devices of defense; military training he may take or leave at option. There is no armed force consistent with a policy of aggression. The navy is built against no menace from the Western Hemisphere, but wholly for defense against that which may threaten from Europe or Asia.

In this land of ours, this America, one-third of the population is foreign born or native born of foreign or mixed parentage. Our numerous "minorities" come from fourteen nations. The native born, whatever his descent, has all political and other rights possessed by him who traces his ancestry to the founding fathers. The foreign born of races that are assimilable are admitted to all these privileges if they want them. We have "minorities" but no minority problem.

In this land of ours, this America, the common citizen may criticize without restraint the policies of his government or the aims of the Chief Executive. He may vote as his judgment or his conscience advises and not as a ruler dictates.

In this land of ours, this America, our songs are dedicated to love and romance, the blue of the night, sails in the sunset, and not to might or to a martyrdom to political cause. Our national anthem has martial words; difficult air. But if you want to hear the organ roll give the people its companion - "America ...of thee I sing." In lighter patriotism we are nationally cosmopolitan. Unitedly we sing of Dixie or of Ioway, where the tall corn grows, of Springtime in the Rockies, or of California, here I come.

In this land of ours, this America, there is not a bomb-proof shelter, and a gas mask is a curiosity. It is not needed that we teach our children where to run when deahhawks darken the sky.

In this land of ours, this America, our troubles present or prospective come from within -- come from our own mistakes, and injure us alone. Our pledges of peace toward our neighbors are stronger than ruler's promise or written treaty. We guarantee them by devoting our resources, greater than the resources of any other nations, to upbuilding the industries of peace. We strut no armed might that could be ours. We cause no nation in our half of

the world to fear us. None does fear us, nor arm against us.

In this land of ours, this America, we have illuminated the true road to permanent peace. But that is not the sole moral sought herein to be drawn. Rather it is that the blessings of liberty and equality and peace that have been herein recounted are possessed nowhere in the same measure in Europe or Asia and wane or disappear as one nears or enters a land of dictatorship of whatever brand. This liberty, this equality, this peace, are imbedded in the American form of government. We shall ever retain them if foreign isms that would dig them out and destroy them are barred from our shores. If you cherish this liberty, this equality, this peace that is peace material and peace spiritual - then defend with all your might the American ideal of government.



Young man, there is America -- which at this day serves for little more than to amuse you with stories of savage men and uncouth manners; yet shall, before you taste of death, show itself equal to the whole of that commerce which now attracts the envy of the world.



ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE
ANSEL ROAD AND EAST 105TH STREET ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 14, 1939.

"YOUNG MAN, THERE IS AMERICA'....."

Towards the close of the Eighteenth Century, Edmund Burke, one of the greatest political thinkers of his day, and one who best understood the temper of the American colonists, and the promise of life in the New World declared:

"Young man, there is America -- which at this day serves for little more than to amuse you with stories of savage men and uncouth manners; yet shall, before you taste of death, show itself equal to the whole of that commerce which now attracts the envy of the world."

Edmund Burke's prophecy came true. Not even his rich imagination could have foreseen the miraculous development of the American continent from his day to this.

What the American people need at this time is another Edmund Burke who will arouse their confidence in themselves again and assure them that their future will be even greater than their past. If we have not assured prosperity today, it is not due to the paucity of our resources, the niggardliness of our soil, the lack of technological skill, or the instruments of production, but to our own colossal blundering and mistakes as well as to the economic upheaval in other parts of the world. A more intelligent organization of our economic life which will insure an equitable distribution of the wealth which is or can be produced in this country - which is more than a country but a continent - is not beyond the capacity of the American people to bring about.

Spiritually, America is the most wholesome country in the world today for young people to live in. One need but look abroad to see how fortunate the youth of this land really is. America is a going concern. Our institutions have not broken down. The Statue of Liberty has not been hurled from its pedestal. Its torch still illumines our land. Our Bill of Rights is still the

compelling document of the American way of life. We are still determined to defend the rights of the individual regardless of his race, or creed, and to curb the insatiable appetites of governments. We are still determined that no one shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law.

Our origins determine our character and our destiny. No one race, religion or nationality built that country. Since 1820, more than thirty-eight millions of immigrants from all parts of the world have come to these shores. We are all immigrants or the children of immigrants, and all - not one race or one religious group - built America, constructed its railroads, dug its mines, worked its mills and ploughed its farms. Numerous peoples from many backgrounds wrought the land of America, developed its sciences, composed its music, created its arts, and fought in its wars.

Therefore, to quote Walt Whitman's phrase:

"Each of us inevitable,
Each of us limitless,
Each of us with his or her right upon the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here."

There have been periods of intolerance in this country when our people in one section of the country or another lost its sense of ~~some~~ fair play and its grasp upon the basic American tradition. There were periods when the Catholics were persecuted in this country and the Irish were discriminated against and natives, themselves the children of immigrants, turned against the newly arrived immigrants. But fortunately for us, our government never condoned or propagated such bigotries and intolerances, and they vanished in due time.

American democracy is not something static, something finished. It is not enough to fight subversive alien anti-democratic influences in the world by defending the status quo in our democracy. Democracy to succeed in a challenging world, must be more dynamic, more aggressive, more confident than the dictatorships of the Old World. Democracy without economic progress in the world today is doomed. Economic progress can be achieved - and this is the peculiar contributio

which America can make to the world without sacrificing the democratic technique and way of life.



1) Edmund
Buair (Irish) - Prophecy came true -

Spent a lifetime 1775

Steel time - (Irish)

As statesman
- one of great names in pol.
literature

assured prosperity - on land

Great future to look forward to - distribution - large trade -
social econ. self suff. - (war - masan)

Not a country - continent - boundless wealth - with in frontiers

2) Spiritually most wholesome land - (Editorial R. G. Callvert)

3) Free from inhuman class + group hates -

Origins - define our composite character

no race - already in 1790 - 314 -

From 1820 - 1937 - 3814 - in in parts from all

Pon - Ex, Rs - "Mother, Exiles"

All built time - Railroads - Mines - Steel Mills - Farms

All with its literature - Science - Music - Art

All fought in it wars -

4) It was important, if this country - Survivors -

"Bill of Rights" - Free exercise of Rel - Freedom, Speech -

Defend life, liberty or property without due process, law
and good -

5/ There have been periods of intolerance - Irish Catholics -
not propagated - a condensed - Varied

6/ For us all - all important -

"Each of us invaluable -

Each of us limitless - each of us with his or her right upon the ^{earth}

Each of us here as diversely as any is here -

Walt Whitman

7/ Destiny - Syncret - Prof - old hates

Not to be swept off hysteria have

Preserve liberty - by com. justice - States Ins
- reinforce democracy

"It is for us the brave.. to be dedicated to the un-
finished work"