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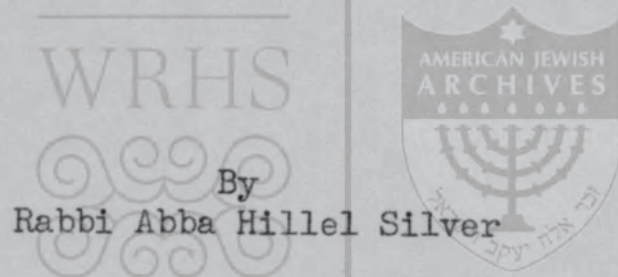
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What can Religion Offer a War Torn Civilization?, 1939.

WHAT CAN RELIGION OFFER A WAR-TORN CIVILIZATION?



By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday, October 22, 1939

I was in London early this summer at the height of the season. And a marvelous city it is, this metropolis of the world, this hub of an Empire which covers one-fourth of the globe. It is a great city athrob with trade, commerce and industry which seemed to be bustling with life and boundless energy. It was a city of great culture, endowed with all things of art and learning. It was a city of great culture, endowed with all things of art and learning which one associates with civilization. Here was a city steeped in history, traditon, strong beyond the strength of centuries, withal, as up-to-date as stream-lined modernity itself. The city was gay with life, music, theatres, and yet strangely incongruous and fantastically unreal, in the midst of all this, they were building trenches in Hyde-Park, trenches and dugouts.

When you returned to your hotel from some fine concert, or a visit to one of the great museums of the city, you were handed a pamphlet: "Some Things You Should Know if War Should Come" - how to recognize air-raid warnings and where to procure your gas mask. You felt suddenly as if some ghost had passed by you, as if the bony fingers of some skeleton had tugged at your sleeve and summoning you down to another world, a dark, dank, sepulchral world underlying this brilliant world in which you have been moving.

You sat in beautiful Kew Gardens, a veritable avenue of flowers, of perfume and peace, or on some quiet campus at one of the colleges of Oxford, or by the gentle Avon in that green world which is forever Shakespeare, and suddenly your eyes wandered to the headlines of the newspaper that you may have been reading and you saw a warning to housewives to lay in two weeks iron rations in their homes, or you read that preparations were being made to evacuate children from London - and you suddenly felt an acid taste in your mouth. Here were words clothed about with death. Here was something

cold and sinister and primordial from another world reminding you that this peace, this beauty, this order and this civilization might at any moment slither and sink into another world, a world not of light, but of darkness, a world of blood, of horror, bestiality and of death. You were overtaken with a frightening sense of the impermanence, of the insecurity of this civilization. And you became aware, as never before, of the very slender and fragile supports upon which this civilization, upon which this beautiful way of life which mankind had built up through the ages actually rests. War and the threat of war reveal how close you are to the world of the jungle and the beast, and how easy we can backslide into it.

There were, my friends, three stages in the religious evolution of mankind, three stages before the religion of mankind finally reached the stage of spirituality. The first was the stage when man worshiped animals and his gods were beasts - the bull, the cow, the monkey, the fish of the sea. That was the first stage - the stage of animal worship. The third stage was the stage where man worshiped his gods in human forms - as Zeus, etc. The intermediary stage was that stage wherein man worshiped gods half human and half beast - such as the Satyr, Faun, Pan, Minotaur. And Mythology which is the history of the gods of man, abounds in legends of the desperate battles between these three stages, the transformation of god from one level to another.

And that is also true of the evolution of man himself. You can trace three stages in the evolution of the human being. The first is the stage of the animal, the original animal stage when man was like all the other animals. The third stage was that of man as the rational human being, the Homo-Sapiens, as you like to think of him, as a man of reason, vision. And here, again,

there is an intermediary stage, when man was half man and half beast. And the whole struggle of civilization and of religion is to keep man on this third level which he had reached with countless centuries of desperate up work and struggle. The whole task of Religion has been to keep man from doing what the Bible calls "backsliding", from keeping man from the perpetual back-sliding into the second stage and then back to ^{the} first stage of this evolution. The sharpest word of criticism in the Bible of people who had become wicked, cruel is that they were "backsliding children" and the sharpest denunciation of a generation of man in the Bible is that "they went backward instead of going forward."

The first thing, therefore, which Religion can offer to a war-torn civilization is the challenge to keep on going forward in spite of the appalling backsliding which is war. The war, my friends, is backsliding. And those who are responsible for it and those who believe in it as an instrument of national policy, those who regard war as desirable or those who think that war is an inevitable element in the order of creation are in very truth "backsliding children", who belong to the midway stage in human evolution - the stage of half man and half beast.

In the sub-human world, in the world of the lower species, war is part of the very order of nature, and as the poet~~s~~ says: Everywhere each slew the slayer and in turn was slain, life living upon Death", and "there is one vast, savage, grim conspiracy of mutual murder." But man, although he shares in this original conspiracy of war, man was destined to rise above that stage of development, to move away from the beast stage.

Man was given the vision which was denied to the lower species - the vision of peace. Now there are those who call this vision a deception. The German general von Moltke expressed himself in the following terms:

"Perpetual peace is a dream, and it is not even a beautiful dream. War is an element in the order of the world ordained by God...Without war the world would stagnate and lose itself in materialism." But these Moltkes, my friends, these people who experience the old Germanic lust for battle, either in Germany or elsewhere are not in a sense, completely men. They are not mature human beings. They are still denizens of the midway world, this half man half beast order of existence.

On the third level of evolution, peace is not a dream, but a goal. War is not an element in the order of the third world in which man has habitation. And it is not peace but war in this third order of existence - it is not peace but war which reduces humanity to conditions worse than materialism, to brutality, bestiality, to hate, to corruption and misery and poverty.

And so the first task of Religion is that regardless of how often men and nations go backward, it must keep up the challenge. The prospect is very discouraging and the odds seem to be all against Religion. Nevertheless, Religion, if it is to be true to its destiny, must continue to set up dykes against the tides of bestiality which continually threaten to seep all over the world. Religion must strive to force man to this third level and to keep him there. The Greeks said that Diogenes, the philosopher, was unable to find an honest man in the world and walked around by day and night looking for an honest man. Diogenes was a cynic and cynicism has no part in prophetic Religion which says: "Where there are no men, you try to be a man."

Religion must continue to denounce in a civilization torn by war, the whole jungle ethics of war. It must continue to make men aware of the insanity of war and try to insure the world against war by increased

armaments. It must keep on in spite of the madness of draining the energies and substance of peoples into munitions of death.

(Used illustration of Cain - he was not murderer, but the one who forged the instrument was)

At the end of this world war the religious forces of mankind must make another effort to re-established a league of free peoples to insure international law, order and morality. This vision has been rejected in the past and will continue to be rejected. Religion will keep on because religion knows that mankind is not at the end of its historic evolution but at its beginning.

It is not true to say that we are at five minutes to twelve. Historically it is true to say that but as far as civilization is concerned mankind is at the very dawn of its evolution. We are just emerging from the darkness of night, ignorance, slavery, cruelty, of this world of half man and half beast. Mankind has a long road ahead of it.

There is a war on now. It will end as all wars sooner or later do end and religious forces of mankind must insist again that another effort be made to build a juster international order, to build up a generation of people which will protect the weaker nations against the stronger and protect minority groups from the majority groups and that this generation shall be empowered, implemented by force to carry out its program of protection of the weak. It seems to us a hopeless task at this moment. But I recall to you that there was a time when this idea seemed so reasonable so appealing that many nations were ready to subscribe to it. You may not know it but in 1910, both Houses of Congress without a single dissenting vote, adopted the following resolution: "Resolved that a commission of five members be appointed by the President of the United States to consider the expediency of utilizing existing international agencies for the purpose of limiting the

armaments of the nations of the world by international agreement, and of constituting the combined navies of the world an international force for the preservation of universal peace, and to consider and report upon any other means to diminish the expenditures of government for military purposes and to lessen the probabilities of war." This was a resolution adopted by the Congress of the United States in 1910.

How far we have slipped back since that time. In the last two or three decades that vision has been darkened and men and nations have again returned to the desperate hope of insuring peace for themselves and for their children by building huge armaments around them, and our own country every year votes increasingly large and staggering sums of money for armaments.

This, my friends, as I see it is the first thing that Religion can offer - the Challenge. "Lift up your voice like a trumpet!" Ceaselessly remind and admonish - "Stay on the level of civilization and do not slip back to the lower world."

Secondly was the offer of a criticism. Religion must admonish . The basis of our civilization is unsound. We are concerned too much - individuals and nations alike with things and not enough with life, with the acquisition of wealth and markets and not with the good life for their citizens. They have set out to possess and as a result are taken possession of. It is to the Tree of Knowledge that men have turned in recent generations rather than to the Tree of Life. But knowledge is not enough. Science is not enough. Inventions and machinery are not enough.

Balaam the wicket prophet of the Gentiles, say the Rabbis, was as wise a man as Moses. In many ways he was a wiser man. Moses was forced to say to God "Let me know thy ways". He didn't know all there was to know about God. Of Balaam it was said in the Bible: "He knew all there was to know about theology, about philosophy, and yet Balaam remains known to history

the "wicked sorcerer" and Moses as the "true prophet". Why? With all his knowledge, with all his wisdom, Balaam did not bring to mankind a good way of life or a just way of life, while the chief concern of Moses was to give mankind a good way. Balaam knew a lot. But that is all. That is not enough for there is wisdom, my friends, which multiplies bitterness. Real knowledge is the knowledge of what is good and just, to care for the orphan and the widow, to protect the poor - that is the knowledge which brings blessings to the world.

The destiny of nations, of peoples, of all political activities of nations must be not in conquest or expansion, but to increase the blessings and well-being of their citizens physically, intellectually, spiritually through education, through greater justice, through greater equality, through greater opportunities, through closer cooperation with its citizens. That is the duty of government. Nations have forgotten that.

Our industrialization has led us to bitter industrial strife and to class struggle within each country. The larger the nation becomes, the greater the social discontent. And the struggle for foreign markets and spheres of economic penetration and influence has led us to build up huge armies and to the militarization of nations. There is no way out as long as nations' primary concern is with markets for they will remain concerned with soldiers and navies.

There is no way out of this vicious circle except through a spiritual re-orientation on the part of men and nations. In place of strife-breeding cupidity there must come an understanding of the technique of cooperation based upon a realization of the complete interdependence of all classes and of all nations. That is a criticism which Religion can offer for a war-torn civilization.

Beyond, Challenge, beyond Criticism, Religion can also offer to mankind Hope, an enthusiasm for humanity, a belief that this is a growing humanity. Science can't do it. And cynicism and skepticism which have so much to feed upon cannot do it. Everything about us seems to point to decline, collapse, degeneration. It is Religion alone deriving its inspiration from an ever living God that remains. At all times it is the voice of optimism, the voice of courage.

And it shall come to pass in the end of days - and these things shall come to be for which man has labored. And so Religion ~~xxxx~~ tells this generation so frightened, seemingly facing the dark brink of war, that someday will come a time when the earth shall be filled with knowledge, someday men will live, every man under his fig tree unafraid, someday man will rediscover the image of God, the divine image in he was destined ultimately to become fashioned.

This is the third thing which Religion can offer. Besides the Challenge, besides hard and decisive criticism, the third thing which Religion can offer is Hope. I think it was Aristotle who said that the purpose of tragedy is to purge the heart of man through fear and pity, that tragedy is to act like a purge of human emotions by stressing the emotions of fear and pity.

Today, my friends, a vast human tragedy is being played out on a the fear of war. colossal stage, / May this tragedy help to purge the hearts of man. May this tragedy help to clarify the thinking of mankind.

1. R. Baroka

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2. what a marvellous mission that is!

Not fully appreciated by mankind. Builders monuments to generals and conquerors - to those who lost death to millions & sorrow. To those who have made men happy - and filled them with the laughter & joy of contentment & peace - few monuments are raised.

For men are fools! They value glory above happiness - and competitive pride above a shared & common joyance & charmed living.

The recorded who writes men to hate, and rivalry & bitterness is of the archangel & hero. The sage who counsels the pleasant ways of reconciliation, forgiveness and peace is often scorned.

3. Roth's came into world to make men happy.

Fear gave rise to R! Silly notion. It was to escape fear, the fear, the dread unknown, of the unpredictable future, fear of life & fear of death - that R. was evolved R. Man needed a source of at-homeness, of belonging, of security & power - to cope with his world - so strange, so over whelming, so incalculably sinister and relentless! And so he reached out for God - whom he had never seen, but without whom he could not live!

God became his kinsman ^{his ally}, his security, his ready help in times of trouble. God upheld by God, he could confidently cope with his environment, and weather difficulties, and solve his problems.

212 p. 2 10/11, 15/11, 15/11

Such faith brings the song to the human heart.

That is why our sacred lied - particularly, the most intimate & distinctive - the lyrics, the praises - reverberates with the mindfulness of our best happiness. At least ten signatures are employed by R. to describe the joy which wells up in his heart - as the presence & in the Esper. of God - the 11/11 - 1/11

~~4/11 1/11 - 2/11~~
1/11 2/11 11/2

4. And not only men! But nature!

ה" מ'אק - אקטוב האור

12 ימים חלום ארץ - ארץ חיים ושלום - ארץ חיים ושלום

2. 401 12-12 32-12-12

Fig. 6 - $M^{100}H_2$ - ^{232}Th ^{228}Ac , ^{228}Th

5. And not only joy - but Laughter! Free, gay, untrammelled
laughter - (50c)

"God will not forsake the righteous man..."

'He will put thy merit with Lazar's

"And they live with shouting"

6. In the (indeed) of poetic imagery & ideas - the poet
occasionally represents God himself as laughing
at the puny, plotting and the sheepish answers &
caveats of little men who think themselves great
& powerful.

(1) "Why do the Heather rape - why do they carpire
against Joel and his annuities."

[illegible]

שנים וילד א צבויק - אחיק אלל לעיל - ה"לחק / 1 - ט חלה ב יזול, אלל -

7. There are all sorts of Parag. (1) Ridicule (2) Scorn

(3) Mordant + Hardwax (4) Silly, Vacuum L.g. pots.

But there is a L. which is loose neither an emph., nor

concent, a finde, a shallower =

"The Haystack & Caribbees!"

4 And not only joy! But Laughter! Free, gay, infectious, irresistible
laughter!



11) This is פיוט - what might
and for centuries the event
The horrible Tension - finds relieve
Here is a mad, fantastic tale - ancient Persia -
Green - proud memory - Gallows.

....
Then all this topsy-turvy - dark thread
of a Threat - to destroy - defenders - lots

Then it all, also, Confident Notes, counsels -
Some thing hard, unbeatable, נחמתי
בני קל, נח - נחמתי נח
ultimately - נחמתי נח

12) This permanent philos. of J. Expenses - Ordained
נחמתי נח נח נח נח נח נח נח נח נח
נחמתי נח נח נח נח נח נח נח נח נח

13/ Gain again - Purim - at one 2/120 - but many -
into this any land - where there was no human - no law
from 1110 to Hittler! Amalek - Uchukud - Tites - Hadman -
Torgomada - to Polinostreff -
Worn off its novelty - perjures - arguments - libels stand
Azazel - for spite - for nat. defeat - pretext to divert resentment
from ruling classes

14/ But our is a Messianic faith - & Way of life - from 1110 to 1111
Save from persecution - persecution = laugh!
We had faith in our God - our values - our ideals - humanity.

15/ Undeceive Com!
That is our curse.

16/ Boyle & the Wraith / old long ago
Warrior & Memphis & Thick
They hurt , the joy there
Created hope for the hills
from Byron , home -
were hurled in mighty attacks against us -
They triumphed for a moment - on their triumph - perished



hurled there

17/ Cross & thunder could not prevail against us!
They & Israel - violence , sanctuary - strengthened
cruelty & ICC -
The rock - of the state - Crusades & the Messiah -
with other populous - could not buy us down
He will the populous - barbarians - was leading
pagans - the belated Caracis , see - buy us
down -

Ec. 3.4: "A time to weep - and a time to laugh -"

Job. 8.20 = ~~הן ה' לו וחסד ג' יום ומה לאל~~
~~פ' וספוק ג' ומה - חסד~~

Ps. 126. 2- ~~ה' ומה לאל~~

Ps. 8.15

~~וה' ומה לאל~~
... למה לו חסד ומה

~~Ps. 18.25~~

R. Barnea - 2 men. | \$/ח' ח' -
ז"ל למנוח - ומה חסד ומה

לשון-למחיה-גולה יפה בזה —
הגולה, האשה, החזקה, אלוהים, חזקה

WRHS



They are evering falling - not for us - for God!
Let the days, Passion - not be forgot then -
may be ye - the be our Brothers -
loyal - that fact - unafraid!



Sermon 535

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE
ANSEL ROAD AND E. 105TH STREET ON SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 22, 1939

WHAT CAN RELIGION OFFER A WAR-TORN CIVILIZATION?

Religion offers a war-torn civilization a Challenge, a Criticism and a Hope.

The Challenge is to go forward in spite of the appalling back-sliding which is war. For war is a back-sliding and those who are responsible for it, or who believe in it as an instrument of national policy, or who regard it as desirable, or as an inevitable element in the order of society, are not completely men, are still denizens of the midway world - the half-man, half-beast stage of human evolution.

In the sub-human world, war is of the very order of nature, but man though sharing in this original arrangement of mutual murder has been given the vision away from the beast - the vision of peace. In spite of heart-breaking disappointments, Religion must continue to hold this vision aloft, to denounce the jungle ethics of war, the insanity of competitive armaments, and the madness of draining the energies and substance of the peoples into munitions of death.

At the end of this ~~world~~ war, the religious forces of mankind must make another effort to re-establish a league of free peoples, to insure international law, order, and morality. The prospect may be very discouraging. The odds may seem all against it. But the effort to master the forces of death through the forces of life must be made. There is no other way.

Religion offers also a criticism of modern civilization which can not be denied. The basis of our civilization is unsound. It has been concerned too much with things and not enough with life. The chief ambitions of nations have had to do with the acquisition of wealth and markets and not with the good life of their citizens. Furthermore, it is to the Tree

of Knowledge that our generation has turned rather than to the Tree of Life. But ^Rknowledge is not enough. "There is a wisdom which multiplieth bitterness."

Our industrialization has led to bitter industrial strife in each country. The increase of wealth has increased social discontent. The struggle for foreign markets and spheres of economic penetration has led to the building up of huge armies and navies, to the militarization of nations, and to war. There is no way out of this vicious circle except through a spiritual re-orientation on the part of men and nations. In place of strife-breeding cupidity there must come an understanding of the technique of cooperation based upon a realization of the complete interdependence of all classes and of all nations. What nations and what classes of men are talking today in terms of charity, humility and self-sacrifice? What has become of the sacred ideal of a humanity made whole through Knowledge, Sympathy and Faith?

Religion also offers mankind in these dark hours, a Hope - an enkindling enthusiasm for humanity and its high destiny, an undefeated belief in a growing humanity. There is much in our world today upon which the cynic and the skeptic may well feed. There is so much that points to decline and degeneration, and yet ^RReligion which draws its inspiration from the inexhaustible life of the Divine, dares to lift the torch of ^RHope, even in this blackness of night.

The history of man does not stand at five minutes to twelve. It is just at the dawn of its day of light and progress. Mankind has just ~~emerged~~ begun to emerge from the half-man-half-beast stage. Some day it will assume the full divine contours in which mankind is to be fashioned. Righteousness, ^RBrotherhood, ^RPeace - these things will come to prevail in ~~the~~ the end of days, though the road is long and terribly hard.