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Friends-Enemies, 1939.

WRHS  
FRIENDS - ENEMIES  
The Fourth Discourse in the Series "Fundamental Human  
Relationships"



By  
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At  
The Temple

On  
Sunday morning, December 17, 1939



Another fundamental human relationship is that of Friendships. It is one of the most spiritual of human relationships. It is not based on ties of blood, or conventional obligations, or vested interests. It is not established in law, or ordained or enforced by society. It is a purely voluntary and spontaneous relationship, and at its highest and best, utterly uncalculating and impersonal.

It is so fine and spiritual a relationship, so immaterial, so subtle, that many people never truly experience it. All men, of course, have acquaintances, but not all men have friends. All men have relations. They are frequently wished on us. Some of them are distantly related, but not far enough removed. And by convention, we are expected to lavish an uncritical, indiscriminate affection on all of them, which obligation, of course, few men really discharge.

But friends are not wished on us. We do not, of course, deliberately choose friends. But we win them. And not every man or woman has that disposition, not every man and woman is possesses of that inner grace wherewith to win friends. Just as some ears are deaf to great music and some eyes blind to great painting - hearing but not comprehending, and seeing but not discerning. So there are hearts that are closed to friendship.

People who are busily absorbed in other relationships, people who are too completely dominated by other interests, or people who are too self-centered, too egoistic, too self-sufficient; or the contrary: people who are too timid, too locked up, escapists who run away from what they fear - from commitments and entanglements - all such people often miss in their lives the completing and exalting experience of friendship.

Friendship like all other human forms of culture, takes time, thought. It must be carefully cultivated, and it requires time for seasoning, ripening.



It is the old friends which are the true friends, just as it is the old wine that is the good wine. So we read in one of our sacred books: "Forsake not an old friend for the new is not comparable to him. A new friend is as new wine. When it is old, thou shalt drink it liesurely." And those who are too busy with other concerns have not the time, therefore, for the proper husbandry of friendship.

These busy folks have many business associates, and many social acquaintances with whom they exchange mutual courtesies and social amenities. They invite, and they are invited. They exchange pleasantries around the dining board. It is all a very pleasant and modish and worldly and certainly not harmful, conventional game. But it has little to do with the real thing which we call friendship. All this is part of the etiquette of social life, and as such it is largely formal, somewhat artificial, a facade, and oft-times a mask. For friendship, if it is anything at all, is revelatory, personally intimate. It is a soul-to-soul contact. It is not a pleasant game but it is a whole hearted devotional experience. God spoke to Moses as a man speaks to his friend. There is something sacred in this relationship of friend to friend, whether it is expressed in speech, or act, or just in unspoken comradeship.

In fact, when you come to think of it, there is something quite inexplicable, something almost mystic in this thing we call friendship, something almost pre-destined. We do not know why we go out of the inner circles of our families to make friends, or why we choose, if choosing it is, those people to be our friends, who become our friends. Why these, and not others? There are other people in the world, in our world, whom we know, whom we meet very often, who may be brighter, or as bright, wealthier or as wealthy, handsomer, or as handsome than our friends, and yet it is just



this particular one, or these particular few people with whom we somehow feel free to share our hopes, our anxieties, our joys, our sorrows. There is something strange about this blending of human hearts and minds and souls here whose catalysis we are ignorant of. We do not know what brings about that peculiar and amazing reaction.

And all great religions and all great literatures stood in the presence of the phenomenon of friendship as if in the presence of something mystical, and something magnificently great. And our own literature abounds in reflections upon this fundamental human relationship - our Bible and our Appocrypha, and our later literature. There are many noble passages on the subject of friendship, in praise of friendship, in characterization of friendship, and in cautio and admonition concerning friends.

One phrase has always struck me as very profound - among the many found on that subject in our literature. It is found in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, in the Appocrypha - those not included in the Bible. This book of Ecclesiasticus was composed by an eminent Jewish physician, Ben Sirach, in the            century B.C.E. He was a wise man who travelled far, learned much and gathered much wisdom in the many years of his life, and he devotes quite a number of chapters to the subject of friendship. In one of them we find this sentence: "A faithful friend is the medicine of life." And that I regard as a very beautiful and apt characterization. There is something healing and strengthening in friendship. There is something of renewal in friendship.

Francis Bacon, an Englishman at the time of Queen Elizabeth who also wrote on the subject of friendship said: "A principal fruit of friendship is the ease and discharge of the fullness and swellings of the heart, which



passions of all kinds so cause and induce...No receipt openeth the heart but a true friend, to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it, in a kind of civil shrift or confession." In other words, both the wise Jews of centuries ago, and the wise Englishman of much later centuries feel that friendship is something which enables man to unburden himself, to ease an over-charged mind or heart, and by so doing, to "cut our sorrows in half and double our joys."

There is healing in friends. It is agreeable to have another human being to share with us those things which burden us, filling our hearts beyond its own capacity to bear them. To that extent, the faithful friend is the medicine of life. And it is that in another sense, not only by sharing our burdens with others, but by taking into our lives the griefs, and the hopes and the problems of our friends, we cleanse our own souls of all the self-coddling. We save ourselves from becoming too wrapped up in ourselves. In other words, friendship acts as a sort of spiritual purgation, catharsis for selfishness, and egoism. In that sense, too, it is the medicine of life. Such is the mutuality of friendship. We heal ourselves and make ourselves whole by giving and by receiving.

There is another very profound comment on friendship found in the Book of Prophets, found in the chapter which I read to you this morning: "Just as iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his Friend." You don't always think of friendship in that light. But it is of the very essence of friendship in that it is a challenge. Friendship not only helps a man to clarify his own ideas by talking them over with his friend, it not only gives a man the benefit of another man's counsel, of his judgment, of his point of view, but friendship, if it is the real



thing, has a way of bringing out the best that is in us. For a real friend is always eager to remain worthy of friendship, to be held in unfailing high esteem by his friends. We are not on parade, of course, with our friends. We must be completely straight-forward, open. We never want to be regarded by our friends as commonplace. Friendship requires an over-tone of splendor, style, ritual. It must never become trivial. That is acquaintanceship. It must never fail in the element of pride. We must be proud of our friends. They must be worthy of that pride. The wise American, Emerson, who among many other things, wrote also on Friendship - and it is of interest to note that there were very few great minds of the world who failed to express themselves on this great need of friendship - wrote:

"We are to dignify to each other the daily needs and offices of  
"Man's life, and embellish it by courage, wisdom and unity,  
"It should never fall into something usual and settled, but  
"Should be alert and inventive and add rhyme and reason  
"To what was drudgery."

That is the transfiguring power of a friendship.

Friendship makes demands. A true friend will keep you up to the mark. Friendship is not a matter of pleasant convenience. A friend is not there just to be a receptacle for our confidences, to soothe us, to agree with us always, to justify us always, to approve of <sup>us</sup>/always, and to give us right. That is the function of a sycophant, of a flatterer.

It is true that "a friend loveth always", but true love is not always indulgent, complacent. There is such a thing as the chastisement of love. Love must sometimes be a sharp censure, a strong disapprobation, firm, but, of course, without malice and without bitterness. And they who cannot endure what our Bible calls the "faithful wounds of a friend", and who prefer the kisses of an enemy, they are unfit for the higher regimen and discipline of friendship.



A friend is not called upon to underwrite all of our pretensions of all kinds, or to subscribe to all our whims, or to sacrifice his convictions to ours - the convictions of independence of judgment, individuality, in the name of friendship.

I can recall some people and so can you, I am sure, whom I came to regard as friends, and who heaped great kindnesses upon me - kindnesses, courtesies which I sought to deserve, and yet, when out of my convictions I felt called upon to challenge their attitude, to oppose them in certain which measures, they regarded as vital to themselves, they became offended, felt as if I had betrayed them. They must have regarded me as very ungrateful indeed. This proprietary type of friendship must be shunned as a blight, for it is a subtle and most dangerous attack upon character. It is a perversion of loyalty. It corrodes everything that is intrinsically worthy in a man or a woman. It is an exploiting kind of thing.

In our sacred literature, we are also cautioned to prove and to test men before we admit them into the sacred sanctuary of friendship. "If thou wouldst get a friend, prove him first and be not hasty to credit him!" For there are those who are friends only in name. "There are those who are friends for their own occasion, who will not abide in the day of thy trouble. If thou be brought low he will be against thee; he will hide himself from thee."

These are the fair weather friends, our prosperity friends, our companions at the table, and our table friends. They are our "Belly Friends". All these, of course, are the scavengers of friendship. They are the camp followers. Some people are taken in by them to their own hurt. But the wise are not beguiled by them.

There is real freindship possible, my friends, only when there exists between two or more people a complete concurrence of interests and a genuine



capacity for loyalty, for trust, for generosity and an utter want of any desire to dominate, monopolize or to exploit. When you have those conditions, you have a soil rich for enduring friendship.

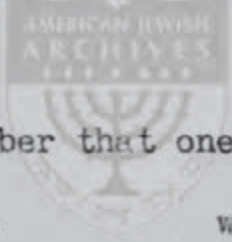
Friends, I said a moment ago, we must win. We must hold them and cultivate them. But enemies always come of themselves, unwanted, always, of course, but at other times unmerited. It is easy to acquire an enemy, but it is hard to acquire a real friend. Sometimes we ourselves are responsible for the enemies we make. Our injustice, our cruelty, our arrogance, our attitudes of contempt towards other people, our sharp dealings are sometimes responsible for that. But sometimes it is other people's vices that make enemies for us. Their envy, their malice, their evil eye make enemies of us.

And few men ever get beyond the gunshot of some enemy at sometime in their lives. Some are decent foes. Others are dirty foes. Some are just by nature the traducers, maligners, mischief-makers. It is their nature. They can't help themselves. Some are avowed enemies, some are concealed enemies. It is only when a man has his back up against the wall that he discovers who are his friends and who are his enemies - how many friends he has and how many enemies he has.

Some enemies can be turned into friends. It takes a great deal of skill and strength of character and forbearance to accomplish this great feat. And it is a great achievement and a great tribute to a man if he can succeed in converting an enemy into a friend. Other enemies cannot be converted. And there is no use eating out your heart trying to do it. Ignore them if you can. Fight them if you must. "Love thine enemies!" That is a doctrine which is not found in our religion. It is a rather psychological impossibility. But we are admonished that if we must make



enemies, we should see to it that it is not our vices which call them into existence, but our virtues. "A man's greatness can be measured by his enemies", someone once said. If in the performance of his duty, if in the championing of righteous causes, if in battling against reason and vice and corruption, you succeed in making enemies for yourself, bitter enemies, vindictive enemies, then they are as much of a tribute to you as the friends ~~in~~ which you have succeeded in winning. Those people who are afraid to make enemies, those who always want to be popular with everybody, those who always want to be liked by everybody, those who never want to take advice, those who are always neutral in their convictions involving moral issues, inescapable moral issues - there are a lot of such people in the world - that sort of folk are consigned just within the gates of Hell. These people cannot enter either Heaven or Hell.

Finally, we are admonished to remember that one's real enemies are within one's own self. I think it was  who said: "Formidable is that enemy that lies hidden in a man's own breast." Fear is such an enemy. Cowardice is such an enemy and avarice and selfishness. In fact, the whole complex which goes by the name of "the evil inclination" - those are our most dangerous enemies. And the wise man seeks to vanquish them, and when he has vanquished them, he is then fit to join in combat with his enemies without. He is equipped, he is armored, he is strong. The man who has subdued these enemies within - selfishness and unbridled ambition, and the desire to master and dominate and exploit, always to amass and always to accumulate - when a man can subdue these rapacious, voracious passions - when then he becomes fit for friend and foe. He becomes a dangerous adversary for enemies and a most welcome individual to his friends.

Friendship - that is the medicine of human life!



1). Another fund. human relat. is that of F.  
One of the most spiritual. Not based on ties of blood, or covenant-  
ed obligations, or vested interests. It is not established in  
law, or ordained and enforced by society. It is purely  
voluntary and spontaneous, and, at its highest and best, utter-  
ly unselfish and uncalculating.

It is so fine and subtle a relationship, so immaterial and sp.  
that many people never truly experience it. All men have  
acquaintances, but not all men have friends. All men have  
relations - they are wished on us. Some, then are distantly re-  
lated but not far enough removed. And by convention we  
are expected to bestow an uncritical and indiscriminate affection on  
all, then. Which obligation few men really discharge. But  
friends are not wished on us. We do not deliberately choose them  
but we win them. And not every man or woman has the is  
possessed of the grace wherewith to win friends - Just as some  
ears are deaf to great music and some eyes blind to great  
painting - hearing but not comprehending, and seeing but not ~~under-~~  
discerning - so there are hearts that are closed to F.

People who are too wholly absorbed in other relationships - too  
completely dominated by other interests - or too self-centered,  
too egoistic, too self-sufficient, or, per contra, too timid,  
too locked-up, too escapist, fearful of commitments and  
involvements - these often <sup>(in their lives)</sup> miss the completing and exalting  
experience of F.

2). F. like all other powers, human cultures, takes time and thought.  
It must be carefully cultivated. It requires time for seasoning  
and ripening. It is the old F. who is the true F., just as the old  
wine is the good wine. Forcible not an old F., for the new is not



comparable to him. A new F. is as new wine. When it is del., then <sup>14</sup> shall drink it with pleasure! Those who are too busy with

other concerns have not the time for the proper husbandry of F. These busy folk may have many business associates and acquaintances with whom they exchange mutual courtesies and social amenities. They invite and are invited. They exchange <sup>modesty and warmth</sup> pleasantries across the dining board. It is all a pleasant, and certainly not harmful, conventional game, but it has little to do with the real meaning of F. It is part of the strength of social life. As such much of it is purely formal, artificial - a facade and a mask. But F. - if it is any thing - is revealing, personal, intimate, a soul-to-soul contact, not a pleasant game but a whole-hearted, devotional experience.

3/ "God spoke to Moses as a man speaks to his F." - There is something sacred in this speech relationship - whether it be expressed in speech, a act, a unspoken comradeship.

XX In fact, when you come to think it, there is something mystic and unexplainable in this thing called F. - as if pre-destined.

We do not know why we go outside the circle of our own families to make F., nor why we choose - if choosing it is - those whom we do. Why these and not others? There are other people who are brighter, and wealthier, or handsomer than our friends, and yet pass among the many who live in our world, whom we know well, it is only this one, or then few whom we have made our known friends, our sp. kin, one with whom we feel free to share our hopes, our anxieties, our joys and our sorrows! There is a strange blending of destiny here whose catalyst no physical eye can detect:-



4). Our lit. abounds in reflections upon this Fund. Human Relat.  
 In Bibl. - Apoc. - & later Lit. - many noble passages on the subject, F. - in  
praise - in characterization - in caution and admonition.  
 "A faithful F. is the medicine of life" (Eccles.). A beautiful charact.  
It is healing and strength and renewal.

Francis Bacon: "A principal fruit of friendship is the ease and  
 discharge of the fullness and swellings of the heart, which passions  
 of all kinds do cause and induce... No receipt openeth the heart  
 but a true friend, to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears,  
 hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart  
 to oppress it, in a kind of civil shaft or confession."

We can unburden ourselves to a F., ease an overcharged  
heart and mind, open our heart - "halve our sorrow  
and double our joy!"

5). And by taking into our lives the griefs etc of our friends.  
we cleanse them of all possible selfishness and self-coddling  
we save ourselves from being wrought up completely in our-  
selves - They are a catharsis of our souls - a sp. purga-  
tion - Medicine of life. Such is the mutuality / real F.

6). "From sharpeneth iron, So a man sharpeneth the countenance of  
his Friend."

Friendship is a challenge! It not only helps a man to  
clarify his own ideas by talking them over with a F.,  
 It not only gives to a man's judgments and decisions  
 the benefit of counsel - the helpful analysis of another mind.  
It brings out the best in one. For a real F. always



is eager to remain worthy of F. and to be held in unfailing <sup>high</sup> esteem by his F. We are not on parade before our friends. We are completely <sup>(+ straight forward)</sup> sincere with them. But we do not wish to be regarded by them even as commonplace. F. requires an overtone of splendor, a style, a ritual. It must never be frivolous. It must never fail in pride.

"We are to dignify to each other the daily needs and offices of man's life, and embellish it by courage, wisdom and unity,  
"It should never fall into something usual and settled, but  
"should be alert and inventive and add rhyme and reason  
"to what was drudgery" (Emerson - 'F.')

F. makes demands! <sup>(A true F. will keep you up to the mark)</sup> Not a matter of pleasant convenience!

A F. is not there just to be the recipient of our confidence  
- To soothe us - always affirms of us - always gives us right  
It is true that "a friend loveth always" - but Love is not  
always indulgent and complacent. It must sometimes be  
a chastisement of love - a sharp censure and  
disapprobation - firm but, of course, without malice  
or bitterness.

And those who cannot endure these "faithful wounds of a F." <sup>27/11, 13/12, 14/12, 15/12</sup> and who prefer flattery  
- are unfit for the high discipline and req. men  
of F. They do not want friends. They want sycophants  
and flatterers - who destroy a man's worth.

A F. is not called upon to underwrite all our pretensions,  
and to subscribe to all our whims, or to sacrifice his



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convictions to ones - his individuality & his independence of judgment.

I can recall people - who I came to regard as friends - who heaped kindnesses upon me which I sought to deserve - and yet - when out of convictions I felt called upon to challenge ~~a stated~~ their viewpoint upon certain important matters and to oppose them in certain manners very vital to them - they were offended - they felt outraged - as if I had betrayed their F. They must have thought of me as very ungrateful, indeed.

This proprietary F. is to be shunned as a blight.

It is a subtle attack upon character. It is a Perversion of Loyalty.  
It corrodes everything that is intrinsically worthy in a man or a woman.

7/ In our sacred lit. we are cautioned to prove and test men before we admit them into the sanctuary of F.  
"If thou wouldst get a F. prove him first and be not hasty to credit him."

For there are those who are friends only in name.

There are those who are friends for their own occasion, who will not abide in the day of thy trouble. If thou be but low he will be against thee; he will hold himself from thee."

There are the fair-weather friends - Prosperity Friends - companions at the table - who are friends for the Belly.







If you must make enemies - see to it that it is not  
your vices but your virtues which will call them into  
being. 17

"A man's greatness can be measured by his enemies"  
For the performance of Duty - championing righteous causes -  
battling wrong, vice and corruption - you will make  
enemies - hitters - vindictive -

They are as much of a Triumph to a man - as the  
Friends which he has won.

Those who are afraid to make enemies - always popular -  
- liked by every one - never take sides - always  
neutral in controversies involving moral issues  
Dante compared <sup>them first within the gates of</sup> ~~to first station~~ in Hell. They  
cannot enter Heaven or Hell.

9) Real enemy to be feared! - 1.6 1.8 1.2 1.2 1.1 0.3 1.6 1.6  
"Formidable is that enemy that lies hid in a man's  
own breast"

Fear - cowardice - avarice - all the evil inclinations  
these must be vanquished - Then a man is then  
prepared to meet his enemies with arms. He  
is a fit adversary for foe, and a welcome  
is fit for Friend and Foe.



FRIENDS -- ENEMIES

*at* The Temple, December 17, 1939





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It is the old friends <sup>who</sup> which are the true friends, just as it is the old wine that is the good wine. So we read in one of our sacred books: "Forsake not an old friend for the new is not comparable to him. A new friend is as new wine. When it is old, thou shalt drink it ~~leisurely~~ <sup>surely</sup>." And those who are too busy with other concerns have not the time, therefore, for the proper husbandry of friendship.

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Friendship makes demands. A true friend will keep you up to the mark. Friendship is not a matter of pleasant convenience. A friend is not there just to be a receptacle for our confidences, to soothe us, to agree with us always, to justify us always, to approve of <sup>us</sup> always, and to give us right. That is the function of a sycophant, of a flatterer.

It is true that "a friend loveth always", but true love is not always indulgent, complascent. There is such a thing as the chastisement of love. Love must sometimes be a sharp censure, a strong disapprobation, firm, but, of course, without malice and without bitterness. And they who cannot endure what our Bible calls the "faithful wounds of a friend", and who prefer the kisses of an enemy, they are unfit for the higher regimen and discipline of friendship.



A friend is not called upon to underwrite all ~~of~~ our pretensions of ~~all kinds~~, or to subscribe to all our whims, or to sacrifice his convictions to ours - the convictions of independence of judgment, individuality, in ~~the~~ name of friendship.

I can recall some people ~~and so can you, I am sure~~, whom I came to regard as friends, and who heaped great kindnesses upon me - kindnesses, courtesies which I sought to deserve, and yet, when out of my convictions I felt called upon to challenge their attitude, to oppose them in certain <sup>which</sup> measures, ~~they~~ regarded as vital to themselves, they became offended, felt as if I had betrayed them. They must have regarded me as very <sup>un</sup>grateful indeed. This proprietary type of friendship must be shunned as a blight, for it is a subtle and most dangerous attack upon character. It is a perversion of loyalty. It corrodes everything that is intrinsically worthy in a man or a woman. It is an exploiting kind of thing.

In our sacred literature, we are also cautioned to prove and to test men before we admit them into the sacred sanctuary of friendship. "If thou wouldst get a friend, prove him first and be not hasty to credit him!" For there are those who are friends only in name. "There are those who are friends for their own occasion, who will not abide in the day of thy trouble. If thou be <sup>brought</sup> ~~bro~~ low he will be against thee; he will hide himself from thee."

These are the fair weather friends, our prosperity friends, our companions at the table, and our table friends. They are our "Belly Friends". All these, of course, are the scavengers of friendship. They are the camp followers. Some people are taken in by them to their own hurt. But the wise are not beguiled by them.

~~There is~~ Real freindship, <sup>possible</sup>, ~~my friends~~, only when there exists between two or more people a complete concurrence of interests and a genuine



capacity for loyalty, ~~for~~ trust, ~~for~~ generosity and an utter want of any desire to dominate, monopolize or to exploit. When you have those conditions, you have a soil rich for enduring friendship.

Friends, I said a moment ago, we must win. We must hold them and cultivate them. But enemies always come of themselves, unwanted, ~~always~~, of course, but at other times unmerited. It is easy to acquire an enemy, but it is hard to acquire a real friend. Sometimes we ourselves are responsible for the enemies we make. Our injustice, our cruelty, our arrogance, our attitudes of contempt towards other people, our sharp dealings are sometimes responsible for that. But sometimes it is other people's vices that make enemies for us. Their envy, their malice, their evil eye make enemies of us.

And few men ever get beyond the gunshot of some enemy at sometime in their lives. Some are decent foes. Others are dirty foes. Some are just by nature the traducers, maligners, mischief-makers. It is their nature. They can't help themselves. Some are avowed enemies, some are concealed enemies. It is only when a man has his back up against the wall that he discovers who are his friends and who are his enemies - how many friends he has and how many enemies he has.

Some enemies can be turned into friends. It takes a great deal of skill and strength of character and forbearance to accomplish this great feat. And it is a great achievement and a great tribute to a man if he can succeed in converting an enemy into a friend. Other enemies cannot be converted. And there is no use eating out your heart trying to do it. Ignore them if you can. Fight them if you must. "Love thine enemies!" That is a doctrine which is not found in our religion. It is a rather psychological impossibility. But we are admonished that if we must make



enemies, we should see to it that it is not our vices which call them into existence, but our virtues. "A man's greatness can be measured by his enemies", someone once said. If in the performance of his duty, if in the championing of righteous causes, if in battling against reason and vice and corruption, you succeed in making enemies for yourself, bitter enemies, vindictive enemies, then they are as much of a tribute to you as the friends ~~xx~~ which you have succeeded in winning. Those people who are afraid to make enemies, those who always want to be popular with everybody, those who always want to be liked by everybody, those who never want to take advice, those who are always neutral in their convictions involving moral issues; inescapable moral issues -- ~~there are a lot of such people in the world~~ -- that sort of folk are consigned just within the gates of Hell. These people cannot enter either Heaven or Hell.

Finally, we are admonished to remember that one's real enemies are within one's own self. I think it was *Publius Syrus* who said: "Formidable is that enemy that lies hidden in a man's own breast." Fear is such an enemy. Cowardice is such an enemy and avarice and selfishness. In fact, the whole complex which goes by the name of "the evil inclination" - those are our most dangerous enemies. And the wise man seeks to vanquish them, and when he has vanquished them, he is then fit to join in combat with his enemies without. He is equipped, he is armored, he is strong. The man who has subdued these enemies within - selfishness and unbridled ambition, and the desire to master and dominate and exploit, always to amass and always to accumulate - when a man can subdue these rapacious, voracious passions - *why* then he becomes fit for friend and foe. He becomes a dangerous adversary for enemies and a most welcome individual to his friends.

Friendship - that is the medicine of human life!



FRIENDS -- ENEMIES  
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Sermon, The Temple, December  
 17, 1939

Friendship is not based on ties of blood, or conventional obligations, or vested interests. It is not established in law, or ordained or enforced by society. It is a purely voluntary and spontaneous relationship, and at its highest and best, utterly uncalculating and impersonal.

It is so fine and spiritual a relationship, ~~so immaterial~~, so subtle, that many people never truly experience it. All men, of course, have acquaintances, but not all men have friends. All men have relations<sup>yes.</sup> They are wished on us. Some of them are distantly related, but not far enough removed. And by convention, we are ~~expected~~ <sup>an</sup> expected to lavish an uncritical, indiscriminate affection on each, ~~which~~ <sup>an</sup> obligation, of course, <sup>which</sup> few really discharge.

Friends are not wished on us. We do not deliberately choose friends. We win them. And not every man or woman has that disposition, not every man and woman is possessed of that inner grace wherewith to win friends. Just as <sup>ears</sup> some are deaf to music and some eyes blind to painting - hearing but not comprehending, and seeing but not discerning - so there are hearts that are closed to friendship.

People who are busily ~~engaged~~ absorbed in other relationships, who are too completely dominated by other interests, or too self-centered, too egotistical, too self-sufficient; or the contrary, people who are too timid, too locked up, escapists who run away from what they fear, from commitments and entanglements - all such people often miss the completing and exalting experience of friendship.

Friendship, like all other human forms of culture, takes time and thought. It must be carefully cultivated, and it requires time for seasoning and ripening. It is the old friends who are the true friends, just as it is the old wine that is the good wine. So we read in one of our sacred books: "Forsake not an old friend, for the new is not comparable to him. A new friend is as new wine. When it is old, thou shalt drink it leisurely." Those who are too busy with other concerns have not the time, therefore, for the proper husbandry of friendship.



These busy folks have many business associates and many social acquaintances with whom they exchange ~~mutual~~ courtesies and social amenities. They invite, and they are invited. They exchange pleasantries around the dining board. It is all ~~very~~ a pleasant and modish and worldly and conventional and certainly not harmful game. But it has little to do with friendship. All this is part of the etiquette of social life, and as such it is largely formal, somewhat artificial; a facade, and oft-times a mask. For friendship, if it is anything at all, is revelatory, personal, intimate. It is a soul-to-soul contact. It is not a pleasant game but a wholehearted devotional experience. God spoke to Moses as a man speaks to his friend. There is something sacred in this relationship of friend to friend, whether it is ~~expressed~~ expressed in speech, or act<sup>s</sup>, or just in unspoken comradeship.

In fact, when you come to think of it, there is <sup>some</sup> ~~something~~ quite inexplicable, something almost mystical in this relationship we call friendship, something almost predestined. We do not know why we go out of the inner circles of our families to make friends, or why we choose, if choosing it is, those people ~~to be~~ ~~our friends~~, who become our friends. Why these, and no others? There are other people in the world whom we know, whom we meet often, who may be brighter, or as bright, wealthier or as wealthy, handsomer or as handsome, ~~than our friends~~, and yet it is just this particular one, or these particular few people with whom we somehow feel free to share our hopes, our anxieties, our joys and sorrows. There is something strange about this blending of human hearts and minds and souls. We do not know the catalyst that brings about this peculiar and amazing reaction.

All great religions and all great literatures stood in ~~the~~ the presence of the phenomenon of friendship as if in the presence of something mystical, something magnificently great. Our literature abounds with passages on the subject of friendship, in praise of friendship, in characterization of friendship, and in caution and admonition concerning friends.

<sup>sentence</sup>  
One phrase has always struck me as profound, among the many found on this subject in our literature. It is in the Book of Ecclesiast<sup>ics</sup>, in



the Apocrypha, those books not included in the Bible. Ecclesiasticus was composed by an eminent physician, Ben Sirach, in the second century before the Common Era. He was a wise man who travelled ~~so~~ far, learned much, and gathered ~~so~~ much wisdom, and he devotes quite a number of chapters to the subject of friendship. In one of them we find this sentence: "A faithful friend is the medicine of life." That I regard as a very beautiful and apt characterization. There is something healing and strengthening in friendship. There is something of renewal in friendship.

Francis Bacon, an Englishman who lived at the time of Queen Elizabeth, wrote on the subject of friendship and said: "A principal fruit of friendship is the ease and discharge of the fullness and swellings of the heart, which





passions of all kinds so cause and induce... No receipt openeth the heart but a true friend, to whom you may impart griefs, joys, fears, hopes, suspicions, counsels, and whatsoever lieth upon the heart to oppress it, in a kind of civil shrift or confession." In other words, both the wise Jew of centuries ago, and the wise Englishman of much later centuries <sup>a</sup> felt <sup>a</sup> that friendship is something which enables man to unburden himself, to ease an over-charged mind or heart, and by so doing, to "cut our sorrows in <sup>half</sup> and double our joys."

There is healing in friends. It is agreeable to have another human being to share with us those things which burden us, filling our hearts beyond <sup>their</sup> ~~its~~ own capacity to bear them. <sup>In this way, a</sup> To that extent, the faithful friend is the medicine of life. <sup>friendship</sup> ~~And it is that in another sense.~~ <sup>and in another way, too.</sup> Not only by sharing our burdens with others, but by taking into our lives the griefs, and the hopes and the problems of our friends, we cleanse our own souls of all the self-coddling, <sup>we</sup> ~~we~~ save ourselves from becoming too wrapped up in ourselves. In other words, friendship acts as a sort of spiritual purgation, <sup>a</sup> catharsis for selfishness, and egoism. In that sense, too, it is the medicine of life. <sup>We</sup> ~~Such is the mutuality of friendship.~~ ~~We~~ heal ourselves and make ourselves whole by giving and by receiving.

There is another ~~very~~ profound comment on friendship found in the Bible: ~~Book of Prophets, found in the chapter which I read to you this morning:~~ "Just as iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." <sup>One does not</sup> ~~Therefore,~~ always think of friendship in that light. But it is of the ~~very~~ essence of friendship ~~in~~ that it is a challenge. Friendship not only helps a man to clarify his own ideas by talking them over with his friend, it not only gives a man the benefit of another man's counsel, of his judgment, of his point of view, but friendship, if it is the real



thing, has a way of bringing out the best that is in us. For a real friend is always eager to remain worthy of friendship, to be held in unfailing high esteem ~~by his friends~~. We are not on parade, of course, with our friends. We must be completely straight<sup>forward</sup>, open. We never want to be regarded by our friends as commonplace. Friendship requires an over<sup>tone</sup> of splendor, style, ritual. It must never become trivial. ~~That is acquaintanceship~~. It must never fail in the element of pride. We must be proud of our friends. They must be worthy of that pride. The wise American, Emerson, who <sup>wrote</sup> among many other things, ~~wrote on friendship~~ <sup>first-rate</sup> and it is of interest to note that there were very few ~~great~~ <sup>subject</sup> minds of the world who failed to express themselves on this ~~great need of friendship~~ <sup>M</sup> - wrote this:

extract

"We are to dignify to each other the daily needs and offices of Man's life, and embellish it by courage, wisdom and unity, "It should never fall into something usual and settled, but "Should be alert and inventive and add rhyme and reason "To what was drudgery."

That is the transfiguring power of a friendship.

Friendship makes demands. A true friend will keep you up to the mark. Friendship is not a matter of pleasant convenience. A friend is not there just to be a receptacle for our confidences, to soothe us, to agree with us always, to justify us always <sup>and</sup> <sup>us</sup> to approve of <sup>us</sup> always, ~~and to give us right~~. That is the function of a sycophant, of a flatterer.

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-6-

A friend is not called upon to underwrite all ~~of~~ our pretensions, ~~of all kinds~~, or to subscribe to all our whims, or to sacrifice his convictions to ours - the convictions of independence of judgment, <sup>of</sup> individuality, ~~in the name of friendship.~~

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I can recall some people ~~and so can you, I am sure~~, whom I came to regard as friends, and who heaped ~~great~~ kindnesses upon me, kindnesses, courtesies which I sought to deserve; and yet, when out of my convictions I felt called upon to challenge their attitude, to oppose them in certain measures, <sup>which</sup> they regarded as vital to themselves, they became offended, felt as if I had betrayed them. They must have regarded me as ~~very~~ <sup>un</sup>grateful indeed. This proprietary type of friendship must be shunned as a blight, for it is a subtle and most dangerous attack upon character. It is a perversion of loyalty. It corrodes everything that is intrinsically worthy, ~~in a man or a woman.~~ It is an exploiting kind of thing.

In our sacred literature, we are ~~also~~ cautioned to prove and to test men before we admit them into the sacred sanctuary of friendship. "If thou wouldst get a friend, prove him first and be not hasty to credit him!" For there are those who are friends only in name. "There are those who are friends for their own occasion, who will not abide in the day of thy trouble. If thou be <sup>brought</sup> low he will be against thee; he will hide himself from thee."   
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 All <sup>They</sup> these, of course, are the scavengers of friendship. They are the camp followers. Some people are taken in by them to their own hurt. But the wise are not beguiled by them.

~~There is~~ Real friendship <sup>is</sup> possible ~~only when~~ only when there exists between two ~~people~~ people a ~~concurrent~~ concurrence of interests and a genuine



-7-

capacity for loyalty, ~~for~~ trust, ~~for~~ generosity, and an utter <sup>absence</sup> ~~want~~ of any desire to dominate, monopolize, or ~~to~~ exploit. When you have those conditions, you have a soil rich for enduring friendship.

As Friends, I said a moment ago, we must win. We must hold ~~them~~ and cultivate them. ~~But~~ Enemies ~~always~~ come of themselves, unwanted, always, of course, but at other times unmerited. It is easy to acquire an enemy, but it is hard to acquire a real friend. Sometimes we ourselves are responsible for the enemies we make. Our injustice, our cruelty, our arrogance, our attitudes of contempt towards other people, our sharp dealings are sometimes responsible for that. But sometimes it is other people's vices that make enemies for us. Their envy, their malice, their evil eye make enemies of us.

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Some enemies can be turned into friends. It takes a <sup>good</sup> ~~great~~ deal of skill and strength of character and forbearance to accomplish this ~~great~~ feat. ~~And~~ It is a great achievement and a great tribute to a man if he can succeed in converting an enemy into a friend. Other enemies cannot be converted. ~~And~~ There is no use eating out your heart trying to do it. Ignore them if you can. Fight them if you must. "Love thine enemies!" That is a doctrine which is not found in our religion. It is ~~a~~ <sup>a</sup> psychological impossibility. But we are admonished that if we must make



enemies, we should see to it that it is not our vices which call them into existence, but our virtues. "A man's greatness can be measured by his enemies", someone once said. If in the performance of <sup>your</sup> duty, if in the championing of righteous causes, if in battling against ~~reason~~ and vice and corruption, you succeed in making enemies for yourself, bitter enemies, vindictive enemies, then they are as much of a tribute to you as the friends ~~in which~~ you have succeeded in winning. ~~These~~ People who are afraid to make enemies, those who always want to be popular with everybody, those who always want to be liked by everybody, those who never want to take advice, those who are always neutral in their convictions involving ~~moral issues~~ inescapable moral issues ~~there are a lot of such people in the world that sort of~~ ~~are~~ are consigned just within the gates of Hell. These people cannot enter either Heaven or Hell.

Finally, we are admonished to remember that one's real enemies are within one's own self. I think it was <sup>Publius Syrus</sup> who said: "Formidable is that enemy that lies hidden in a man's own breast." Fear is such an enemy. Cowardice is such an enemy, and avarice and selfishness. In fact, the whole complex <sup>of emotions</sup> which goes by the name of "the evil inclination" - those are our most dangerous enemies. ~~and~~ The wise man seeks to vanquish them, and when he has vanquished them, he is ~~then~~ fit to join in combat with his enemies without. He is equipped. <sup>p</sup> He is armored. <sup>h</sup> He is strong. The man who has subdued these enemies within - selfishness and unbridled ambition, and the desire to master and dominate and exploit, always to amass and always to accumulate <sup>why?</sup> when a man can subdue these rapacious, voracious passions - <sup>why?</sup> then he becomes fit for friend and foe. He becomes a dangerous adversary for enemies and a most welcome ~~individual to his friends~~.

Friendship <sup>is</sup> ~~the~~ the medicine of <sup>the soul!</sup> ~~human life!~~



WRHS  
FRIENDS - ENEMIES

The Fourth Discourse in the Series "Fundamental Human Relationships"



By  
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At  
The Temple

On  
Sunday morning, December 17, 1939



<sup>A</sup>  
Another fundamental human relationship is that of Friendships. It is one of the most spiritual of human relationships. It is not based on ties of blood, or conventional obligations, or vested interests. It is not established in law, or ordained or enforced by society. It is a purely voluntary and spontaneous relationship, and at its highest and best, utterly uncalculating and impersonal.

It is so fine and spiritual a relationship, so immaterial, so subtle, that many people never truly experience it. All men, of course, have acquaintances, but not all men have friends. All men have relations. They are frequently wished on us. Some of them are distantly related, but not far enough removed. And by convention, we are expected to lavish an uncritical, indiscriminate affection on all of them, which obligation, of course, few men really discharge.

But friends are not wished on us. We do not, of course, deliberately choose friends. But we win them. And not every man or woman has that disposition, not every man and woman is <sup>in</sup> possesses of that inner grace wherewith to win friends. Just as some ears are deaf to great music and some eyes blind to great painting - hearing but not comprehending, and seeing but not discerning, so there are hearts that are closed to friendship.

People who are busily absorbed in other relationships, people who are too completely dominated by other interests, or people who are too self-centered, too egoistic, too self-sufficient; or the contrary: people who are too timid, too locked up, escapist who run away from what they fear - from commitments and entanglements - all such people often miss in their lives the completing and exalting experience of friendship.

Friendship like all other human forms of culture, takes time, thought. It must be carefully cultivated, and it requires time for seasoning, ripening.



It is the old friends <sup>who</sup> ~~which~~ are the true friends, just as it is the old wine that is the good wine. So we read in one of our sacred books: "Forsake not an old friend for the new is not comparable to him. A new friend is as new wine. When it is old, thou shalt drink it liesurely." And those who are too busy with other concerns have not the time, therefore, for the proper husbandry of friendship.

These busy folks have many business associates, and many social acquaintances with whom they exchange mutual courtesies and social amenities. They invite, and they are invited. They exchange pleasantries around the dining board. It is all a very pleasant and modish and worldly and certainly not harmful, conventional game. But it has little to do with the real thing which we call friendship. All this is part of the etiquette of social life, and as such it is largely formal, somewhat artificial, a facade, and oft-times a mask. For friendship, if it is anything at all, is revelatory, personally intimate. It is a soul-to-soul contact. It is not a pleasant game but it is a whole hearted devotional experience. God spoke to Moses as a man speaks to his friend. There is something sacred in this relationship of friend to friend, whether it is expressed in speech, or act, or just in unspoken comradeship.

In fact, when you come to think of it, there is something quite inexplicable, something almost mystic in this thing we call friendship, something almost pre-destined. We do not know why we go out of the inner circles of our families to make friends, or why we choose, if choosing it is, those people to be our friends, who become our friends. Why these, and not others? There are other people in the world, in our world, whom we know, whom we meet very often, who may be brighter, or as bright, wealthier or as wealthy, handsomer, or as handsome than our friends, and yet it is just



this particular one, or these particular few people with whom we somehow feel free to share our hopes, our anxieties, our joys, our sorrows. There is something strange about this blending of human hearts and minds and souls here whose catalysis we are ignorant of. We do not know what brings about that peculiar and amazing reaction.

~~And~~ all great religions and all great literatures stood in the presence of the phenomenon of friendship as if in the presence of something mystical, and something magnificently great. ~~And~~ Our own literature abounds in reflections upon this fundamental human relationship - our Bible and our Appocrypha, and our later literature. There are many noble passages on the subject of friendship, in praise of friendship, in characterization of friendship, and in cautio and admonition concerning friends.

One phrase has always struck me as very profound - among the many found on that subject in our literature. It is found in the Book of Ecclesiasticus, in the Appocrypha - those not included in the Bible. This book of Ecclesiasticus was composed by an eminent Jewish physician, Ben Sirach, in the            century B.C.E. He was a wise man who travelled far, learned much and gathered much wisdom in the many years of his life, and he devotes quite a number of chapters to the subject of friendship. In one of them we find this sentence: "A faithful friend is the medicine of life." And that I regard as a very beautiful and apt characterization. There is something healing and strengthening in friendship. There is something of renewal in friendship.

Francis Bacon, an Englishman at the time of Queen Elizabeth who also wrote on the subject of friendship said: "A principal fruit of friendship is the ease and discharge of the fullness and swellings of the heart, which



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There is another very profound comment on friendship found in the Book of Proverbs, found in the chapter which I read to you this morning: "Just as iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his Friend." You don't always think of friendship in that light. But it is of the very essence of friendship in that it is a challenge. Friendship not only helps a man to clarify his own ideas by talking them over with his friend, it not only gives a man the benefit of another man's counsel, of his judgment, of his point of view, but friendship, if it is the real



thing, has a way of bringing out the best that is in us. For a real friend is always eager to remain worthy of friendship, to be held in unfailing high esteem by his friends. We are not on parade, of course, with our friends. We must be completely straight-forward, open. We never want to be regarded by our friends as commonplace. Friendship requires an over-tone of splendor, style, ritual. It must never become trivial. That is acquaintanceship. It must never fail in the element of pride. We must be proud of our friends. They must be worthy of that pride. The wise American, Emerson, who among many other things, wrote also on Friendship - and it is of interest to note that there were very few great minds of the world who failed to express themselves on this great need of friendship - wrote:

"We are to dignify to each other the daily needs and offices of  
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~~There is~~ <sup>U</sup>Real freindship, possible, ~~my friends~~, only when there exists between two or more people a complete concurrence of interests and a genuine



capacity for loyalty, ~~for~~ trust, ~~for~~ generosity and an utter <sup>absence</sup> want of any desire to dominate, monopolize or to exploit. When you have those conditions, you have a soil rich for enduring friendship.

Friends, I said a moment ago, we must win. We must hold ~~them~~ and cultivate them. But enemies always come of themselves, ~~unwanted, always, of course, but at other times unmerited.~~ It is easy to acquire an enemy, but it is hard to acquire a real friend. Sometimes we ourselves are responsible for the enemies we make. Our injustice, our cruelty, our arrogance, our attitudes of contempt towards other people, our sharp dealings are sometimes responsible for that. But sometimes it is other people's vices that make enemies for us. Their envy, their malice, their evil eye make enemies of us.

~~And~~ few men ever get beyond the gunshot of some enemy at sometime in their lives. Some are decent foes. Others are dirty foes. Some are just by nature the traducers, maligners, mischief-makers. It is their nature. They can't help themselves. Some are avowed enemies, some are concealed enemies. It is only when a man has his back up against the wall that he discovers who are his friends and who are his enemies - how many friends he has and how many enemies he has.

Some enemies can be turned into friends. It takes a great deal of skill and strength of character and forbearance to accomplish this great feat. ~~And~~ It is a great achievement and a great tribute to a man if he can succeed in converting an enemy into a friend. Other enemies cannot be converted. ~~And~~ There is no use eating out your heart trying to do it. Ignore them if you can. Fight them if you must. "Love thine enemies!" That is a doctrine which is not found in our religion. It is a rather psychological impossibility. But we are admonished that if we must make



enemies, we should see to it that it is not our vices which call them into existence, but our virtues. "A man's greatness can be measured by his enemies", someone once said. If in the performance of his duty, if in the championing of righteous causes, if in battling against reason and vice and corruption, you succeed in making enemies for yourself, bitter enemies, vindictive enemies, then they are as much of a tribute to you as the friends ~~in~~ which you have succeeded in winning. Those people who are afraid to make enemies, those who always want to be popular with everybody, those who always want to be liked by everybody, those who never want to take advice, those who are always neutral in their convictions involving moral issues, inescapable moral issues - ~~there are a lot of such people in the world - that sort of~~ ~~folk~~ are consigned just within the gates of Hell. These people cannot enter either Heaven or Hell.

Finally, we are admonished to remember that one's real enemies are within one's own self. I think it was ? chh who said: "Formidable is that enemy that lies hidden in a man's own breast." Fear is such an enemy. Cowardice is such an enemy and avarice and selfishness. In fact, the whole complex which goes by the name of "the evil inclination" - these are our most dangerous enemies. And the wise man seeks to vanquish them, and when he has vanquished them, he is then fit to join in combat with his enemies without. He is equipped, he is armored, he is strong. The man who has subdued these enemies within - selfishness and unbridled ambition, and the desire to master and dominate and exploit, always to amass and always to accumulate - when a man can subdue these rapacious, voracious passions - when then he becomes fit for friend and foe. He becomes a dangerous adversary for enemies and a most welcome individual to his friends.

Friendship - that is the medicine of human life!