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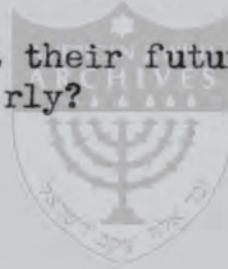
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Are you Afraid of the Future?, 1940.

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ARE YOU AFRAID OF THE FUTURE?

Are young people today worried about their future? And people
generally? And Jews particularly?



By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, March 17, 1940

I believe that it was Professor Einstein who, on the occasion of some interview, said "I never think of the Future; it comes soon enough." And in this wisdom there is much shrewdness as well as profundity. Much worry about the future has ruined the present for many people. It is one thing to plan for the future, to be prepared as far as possible for whatever the future will bring. It is quite another thing to speculate on the future and to build our lives on such speculation. One is prudence, and the other is gambling.

"The wise God covers with the darkness of night the issues of the Future", is a favorite saying of one of the sages of ancient Rome. "The wise God covers with the darkness of night the issues of the Future." Any man who thinks himself clever enough to be able to penetrate that darkness, to know how the world or his world will be five years from now, and who proceeds to build his career upon that knowledge which he thinks he has won by his penetration into the future - that man is in for some very bitter surprises.

Sound planning for one's future is not a matter of clairvoyance, of knowing. Sound planning for the future consists in preparation of oneself physically, mentally, morally for whatever the future may hold in store for one. To prepare oneself physically is to have powers of endurance, flexibility in adaptation to new situations, and moral courage to dare, and to surmount both defeat and victory.

In other words, one's hopes should not be placed so much on the thought of some fortunate constellation of events tomorrow. One's hopes should be grounded principally in oneself, in one's self-preparation, in one's training, in one's ability, in one's confidence achieved through training, in being able at any time to wrestle ~~with~~ with a fair measure of success with whatever problem life may bring him in the days to come.

One can readily understand, my friends, the present anxiety of people and their concern with the future. "He is only anxious about the future to whom the present is unprofitable." And our present seems to be very unprofitable indeed. Here we are in a world at war; with the nations not yet at war, in danger of being dragged into it. Here we are in a situation where small nations are in danger of being wiped out, or reduced to vassalage. Here we are in a world where men are being persecuted because of race or religion. Here we are in a world where myriads of men are being driven into exile. Here we are in a world where tyranny wields its scourges over many men and nations, where human freedom and liberties are being extinguished. Here we are in a situation where there is widespread unemployment, where business is bad, where young men cannot find jobs or pursue their careers. Certainly the present seems very unprofitable indeed. And because of that, there is small wonder that men turn anxious eyes to the future and are afraid. And this fear, my friends, has a way of paralyzing enterprise. Hence some businessmen will hoard their financial resources and refuse to put their money to work - because they are afraid.

I know, and you know, of young people who will not marry and found a home of their own, and families, because they don't earn enough; and they are afraid they will not earn enough as things now appear.

I know, and you know, of people who have been quite liberal and progressive in their social, economic and political thinking, and who have begun to contract, so to speak, their social vision because they have suddenly become afraid of the future. There is so much talk about revolution and war. They have become frightened of their own social courage and enterprise and become hardened in a shell of ~~conservative~~ conservatism.

You and I know of Jews who are today loaded with a double share of the world's distemper, Jews who have become panicky, who are afraid. And some Jews because of that would like to be, so to speak, rubbed out. Others are driven in upon themselves into a sort of self-chosen isolation seclusion from the world and have broken their normal contacts from the world about them. And others, again, vigorously should their counter-defiance to the world.

Literally speaking, so many of them, because they are shell-shocked, no longer react normally to normal situations. Now all of these people are not intelligently or ~~carefully~~ ordering their present lives and present conduct so as to be prepared for ^{what} ~~ordering~~ the future will hold in store for them. They are rather indulging themselves in feverish speculation for the future and are reacting hysterically to their own speculation. In other words, they are scared, are "scaring the wits out of themselves". And that is bad.

The business man, for example who is afraid to enter actively in the arena of business because he is afraid of what the future holds is helping to undermine business by hoarding his money, and is thereby contributing to the dissipation of business.

If our own economy is based on private "enterprise" and "initiative", if that economy loses that spirit of enterprise or initiative, then no one's private resources are safe. You can never have enterprise and initiative without the element of risk and loss and if this would break down, no one's private resources, however safely stored away will be quite secure. When our system of capitalism becomes paralyzed with fear, it is on the way to destruction. And that word of advice uttered by the President in his first inaugural address still holds good today: President Roosevelt said that "The

only thing we have to fear, is Fear itself...nameless, unreadining, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance."

These facts are true - that this is a vast country of nigh endless resources, that there are in this country limitless resources of technological skill; that there are in this country some one hundred millions of people who need food, raiment and shelter and who demand higher standards of living; that we have the skill, machinery and resources to satisfy that, and any businessman who ca not gamble upon this basic fact is unworthy to be engaged in any economic plan. Only fear and cowardice and utter stupidity will defeat the American dream of a free and prosperous people. What the American businessman need fear is not so much bad politics or communism, but his own lack of faith, and his own lack of courage and his own lack of initiative.

And similarly with a young man who is afraid of the future. Times are hard for many of them. And many of them are unable to find employment, have not been able to find employment for many years. They seem to face a blank wall. Nevertheless, one wonders whether their pioneering fathers in this country had an easier time of it. One seems to forget that this is not the only and the first depression in the country. There were many periods of prolonged unemployment. And in the days of our fathers our country was far less prepared for unemployment than it is today. There were no large programs of public works, no unemployment measures, no youth conservation camps to employ our employed youth. There were no provisions to subsidize agricultural enterprises or industrial enterprises. It is clea to anyone that given the foundation which we possess, and a vast continent of unleashed resources, and a people with a remarkable tradition for enterprise, that such a people in such a land is bound to solve the pröblem of finding work

for all its people who really want to work. In the meantime, it is hard for many of our youth, but this period of testing and trial will not necessarily hurt them spiritually or morally. Young people are helped by tests of endurance. Young people ought to learn to endure, to resist defeat. It will bring an element of resistance, toughness, strength into their character. No one can mold water. No one can carve anything out of rotten wood;; in order to carve, there must be resistance. These testings will bring out strength, resistance in our rising generation.

Young people today who forego marriage because they are not earning enough are, in my humble judgment, not wise, because they are missing the best, the most eager years of their lives for companionship. They are missing the joy of sharing together hard tasks, and solving together difficult problems. And this sharing together, this solving together of hard problems knits souls together. These young people ought to remember that their parents or their grandparents did not wait upon comfort or wealth to join their destinies. In most instances their parents and grandparents had the courage to start off together with nothing except their youth and love and their courage. Some of them did reach comfort. Some of them did reach wealth. Many of them never reached comfort; and many of them never reached wealth. But they got out of life much more than material comfort and/wealth. They had their golden dreams together and homes and children to enjoy them with.

The security of a job, of a career is highly desirable. But my dear friends, there is very little security in the world today. Our young people ought not to sacrifice their young lives on that score. It is much better to start out life with a security of a great love, with the security of devotion and strong companionship because that love will give them

courage to face unflinchingly whatever life brings to them. They will find supreme satisfaction in the beauty and splendor of their own inner world.

No, it is not good to start life with a fear.

I mentioned the liberal people whom you and I have known who have become frightened by what the extremes have done to our sad world. They have become conservative and timid because of the extremes, yet the only things that will save democracy and freedom are more democracy and freedom and more progress and more adjustment, not through revolution, but through law. It is progress, nevertheless.

What is wrong with our world is that the social purpose has not been applied as vigorously as it should be applied. We have power enough. There is abundance in the world. There are swift modes of communication. There is enough of technology today to give all the people on earth all that is required to live on the earth. What is wrong? Why, instead of peace and contentment, have we war and apocalyptic beasts tramping over the earth? Why? Simply because the social purpose has been ignored. From the abnormalities in life we learn what the normal should be. I think it was Goethe who said: "Nature reveals her secrets in abnormalities, in monsters." And in the frightful political and social abnormalities of our day, we are learning that what is wrong is that the social vision, the social purpose in life has been ignored in the last few years. The principles ~~principles~~ of justice, equality have been ignored have been ignored. The many have been sacrificed to the few. Wealth has not been distributed justly and properly so as to enable all to share justly in the things which they produced. And there is no hope of saving our way of life, a way made beautiful by freedom, liberty, the rights of men, brotherhood and tolerance - there is no way of saving that way of life except as we extend the principles of justice to all, as we democratize

the earth and as we introduce more of the social vision into our scientific and material achievements.

So that, what we need today, is more courage to move forward, and those liberals who are becoming intimidated by the extremists of the Right and the Left and run to cover, are betraying the cause of true liberty and democracy in the world.

No, timidity and fear will not save our way of live.

Lastly, concerning the fear of our own people: It is of course clear that the disasters of our day have been overwhelming. It seems as the whole catalog of maledictions which are found in the Book of Deuteronomy have come true in our own day:

"And thou shalt be oppressed and robbed
All the time - and none to save thee

Thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt
not dwell in it.

Thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt
not use the fruit thereof

Thy sons and thy daughters shall be
forced to remove to another people -
and thine eyes shall look, and fail
with longing for them all the day.

The Lord will bring a nation against thee
of fierce temper - which shall show no
compassion for old and young...
and he shall not leave thee corn, wine or oil -
until he have caused thee to perish

And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee,
and thou shalt fear night and day
and shalt have no assurance of thy life."

I suppose that in the days of the First Destruction, when Jeremiah lived, and Ezekiel lived, the people then, twenty-six hundred years ago felt that this catalog of maledictions had come true in their own day.

But how did they meet the situation of that day, the fear on the part of their people? What did they do? How did they speak to their people? I read to you from the Bible, this morning, one of the magnificent preachments of the prophet Jeremiah who preached with hope and high confidence. You hear those echoes ring through all the marvelous prophecies. That was spoken at the time when Jerusalem lay in ashes, when the exiles, chained to one another, were being led across the wilderness of Judea to a distant and alien land when the last hope seemed to have vanished. And as you read one of the great chapters of Ezekiel, you will find the same note struck in that hour of seeming defeat. The prophets of Israel spoke to their people not of fear, but of courage, hope. "Don't be afraid!" All the great spokesmen of our people who lived in terror and disaster said to them: "Do not be afraid!" "I will restore!" - that is another motif. That is another concept. "I will make a new and everlasting covenant of peace and love." "I am only testing you in the furnace of affliction not to break you, but to refine, purify and strengthen you. Exile and suffering are intended not to crush Israel, but to cleanse, purify and strengthen her. "Be a light unto other nations". God is cleansing you spiritually, and building you up through trial and suffering so that you will get a deeper insight into the life and destiny of mankind, so that you will become a light unto nations and teach them the ways of God.

That is the historic, classic reaction of our people to trial and suffering. Any other reaction is un-Jewish and unworthy....The Jewish people gave a religion to the whole of mankind, and have survived to this day, the Jewish people numbering sixteen million strong throughout the earth.

And if we can recapture, my friends, these motifs of the spirit of our people, if we can cease to be "vague half-believers of our casual creeds", and really take to heart these teachings, and organize our lives ~~z~~ round them,

live by them, then we shall cease being afraid. Not only shall we cease being afraid, we shall be able to resume our offensive and forward march and counter-attack into the future.

When the Second Temple was destroyed, a book was written, the book of the Second Ezra, in which this question was propounded: "Are they then of Babylon better than they of Zion?" The author does not use Rome as an example, because he was living under the tyranny of Rome at the time. He goes back to the First Exile and asks himself this question: Were the Jews really so bad and the Babylonians really so good that the Jews had to be crushed and victory given to the Babylonians? Why was that? This is the answer which was given. It is the same answer which the prophets of old gave. It is not that the Babylonians were better than the Jews. It is that the condition of life for the Jewish people that the outstanding characteristic of his destiny is struggle and tribulation and suffering for an ideal. Why did God select Sinai, when there were many other mountains greater, to leave his law to mankind? Why did God select Israel to ~~be~~ be the "servants of God"? There were more powerful people, numerically stronger people to whom that mission could have been given. And yet one cannot and one does not ask questions concerning destiny. That is our destiny. Our life has been a life of swords, of tension and struggle and suffering and culture. Always our people carried within itself a vision of life, a new concept of destiny which was in conflict with the destiny and life of the pagans. And to this day it is in conflict with the neo-paganism in our country. And hence the bitterness of the human struggle.

And the Jew was not content to reconcile himself to accept the ways of life. He challenged them. "Their altars thou shalt smash!" The peoples of ancient Rome were very receptive of alien theologies. They absorbed them all. The religious concept of Israel was intolerant of alien deities, and of

pagan concepts and moralities, and from that day to this, our life has been one of struggle against these pagan concepts.

Nietzsche who was one of the great teachers of the Nazis, who inspired H. S. Chamberlain, Spengler, and provided the Nazis with their whole system of knowledge, if you can call it that, said: "The great man of the future... must necessarily be a criminal, a man who is the scourge of humanity, who in order to realize the expansion of his personality...needs great , in order to obtain his object."

Hitler subscribed to this theory, that great men of the future must necessarily be criminal in order to realize the expansion of his personality. He must sacrifice millions of people in order to obtain his object. That is what he is doing today. The Nazis wanted expansion, and this expansion must be achieved at the expense of others. Thus to realize their ambitions, Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia and other countries were swallowed up.

But the Jewish concept, the classic Jewish concept^{as} was taught by the prophet, or the sage, a man who was a leader in Israel, pointed out great opportunities for service and self-sacrifice.... The Jews stand as representatives of a great civilization, and if we suffer one defeat,... that is part of the war. The concept of the Jews and of their position in the world today leaves no room for fear. It demands courage, faithfulness to a great quintessential ideals in the world.

"What are you afraid of? If you forefathers and mine were motivated by fear, these last two thousand years, there would not be left a remnant of Israel in the world. But the Jew said: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, of whom need I fear? " The Jew said: Yea, thou I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thou art my rod and my staff. They comfort me."

I think that is a most beautiful attitude to take.

There is a great day coming. After the turmoil and sorrow of this age, there will be a better day, a happier day. The coming generation, God be willing, will enjoy a more peaceful life than our generation has endured.



1. "I never think of the Future; it comes soon enough" - Emerson

Wisdom here - both shrewd and profound.

^{Much} - Worry abt. the Future has ruined the Present for many people.

- It is one thing to plan, so as to be prepared ^(-as far as possible) for the future. It is quite another thing to speculate abt. the future and build one's life upon ^{such} ~~that~~ speculation; one is Purduce. The other - gambling!

- "The wise God covers with the darkness of night the issues, the Future"

- And the man who thinks himself clever enough to penetrate the Future, to know how the world or his world will be 5 yrs - 10 yrs. from today and proceeds to base his career upon it - is in for some very bitter surprises.

- Sound planning for one's future is not a matter of clairvoyance.

- It consists of such physical, intell. and moral preparation as will equip a man for whatever the future may hold in store for him - to give him powers of adaptation, phys. endurance, flexibility in adaptation to new situations, and moral courage to dece. and to surrender both defeat and victory! -

- One's hope should be placed not so much in some fortunate constellation of events - ~~but as~~ ^{as} in one's preparation - one's training and ability - and one's confidence to wrestle, with a fair prospect of success, with whatever problems or situations the future ^{may} ~~will~~ present.

2. One can readily understand the present anxiety of many people, and their concern with the future.

"He is only anxious about the future to whom the present is unprofitable."

Our present seems very unprofitable ^(-indeed) The world is at war - large

part of it - Others may be dropped in - Small nations are being wiped out or ~~completely~~ reduced to vassalage - Men are being persecuted because of race or religion - Myriads of men are being driven into exile - Terror and Tyranny wield their scourges over many men traitors - Human freedom and liberties are being extinguished - There is widespread unemployment at home - Business is bad - a not good - Young men cannot find jobs or pursue their careers.

- No wonder, men turn anxious eyes to the Future and are afraid.
- This fear, in some instances, paralyzes enterprise. Some men will not ~~not~~ ^{board} their ^{financial} resources and ~~are~~ refuse to put their money to work - hee. they are afraid!
- Young people will not marry - hee. they don't earn enough and are afraid that they will never earn enough - as things now appear.
- Progressive people are contradicting their social vision hee. they have suddenly become afraid of the Future. "Comes the Revolution!"...
- Tens, especially, loaded with a double share, the wallets deserters, have become paranoid. - That's not possible - and, like all shell-shocked people no longer react normally to normal situations - Some would like to be rubbed out - (Fornum) - Others driven in upon cos - & isolating them - 2elms - Others - purmely + frithing by shouting their counter-claims to the world -

3/. All of these - are not carefully + purposefully ^{ordering} planning their present conduct, was to be prepared ^{for the future?} ^{what happens} ^{reparable} for the Future? They are indulging as in permanent speculation as to what that Future might be - as are reacting hysterically to ^{their own} that speculation. - They are scaring the wits out of themselves -

① Bus. man - is undermining business - which will disrupt his head. If an econ. based on private "enterprise" "financial", breaks down. then no one's private resources are safe. When a safe system is para.

lyzed them Fear - it is on the way to destruction -

(3)

"The only thing we have to fear, is Fear itself... nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance" - First paragraph of Franklin D. Roosevelt -

- Vast country - limitless resources - technical skill - Pop. 9 130 M.
demanding high standard of living -

- Only fear, cowardice, stupidity, can defeat the inner dream
of a free and a prosperous people.

- What they need fear - not politics - communism - but their
own lack of faith, courage ^{social} vision

4/ Young men - Hard - Wonder whether their promising forefathers
had it any easier - Depression - Econ. Crisis - Unemployment
- country less prepared to care for its Unem. as to-day -
- Public Works - C.C.C. - Un. Insurance - Aid to Farmers

- Amer. will solve its problem of finding work for people who want to work -

- In meantime - hard for now! the will not necess. hurt them.
Build character - Must learn to wait, to endure, to re-
sist defeat! Element of "toughness" - You cannot mold
water! a cane rather wood! Resistance in object which
is called a mold!

- In so many ways - father! Miss the best years, then lines
for companionship - Joy of sharing in hard tasks and
solving diff. problems together - Their fathers & grandfathers did
not wait upon wealth & comfort to join their destinies -

They had the courage to start off together with nothing but their
love & courage & faith. Some, then reached wealth &
comfort. Others did not. But they had that which is more >
wealth & comfort - golden dreams - and high adventure
and a home, and children to enjoy in their youth. — They
were not afraid of life — They security of a job or a career
is highly desirable — But there is very little security in our
world — and young people should not sacrifice their happiness
for that. Better to start off in the security of a great
love — which will enable them to face life with unflinching faith,
content to work together & struggle together — and find life's
supreme satisfaction in the beauty ^{of their} ~~and~~ ^{splendid} their own inner world.

Progression — become conservative & timid here. of Extremes
Yet — only things which will save Dem. Freedom — more progress
than law or revolution — but more progress!

What is wrong with our world — is Social Purpose has not
been applied as vigorously as it should to sc. & material
achievement —

- Poverty (machine) Abundance — Communication — ^{abundance} War ^{which reveals the secrets in war} etc. Beasts
- Social Purpose ^{Ignored} & Pride of justice — Many sacrificed to Few
- What hope for saving our human. and . demer. wealths!
- Courage to move forward!

6/ Jews: ד נ נ נ (Jude). But Jeremiah - Ezekiel.

① 1/10/12/11. ② נחל - I will return ③ שְׁבוּ נְאֻם יְהוָה - an
 everlasting covenant of love & peace. ④ יְהוָה יִשְׁמַח בְּאֵלֵינוּ - "The testimony
 in the presence of affliction" - Exile & suffering are intended not to crush
 Israel, but to cleanse, purify & strengthen her. ⑤ יְהוָה יִשְׁמַח בְּאֵלֵינוּ -
 a light unto the nations - "Messianic"

(- "vague half-beliefs of our comrades!"

7). ~~the~~ If we can recapture these lost-minds! we will not only save
to be afraid - he will ~~then~~ take the guerrilla!

"Are they then Babylon better & they of Zion?"

This is the conclusion, our life - our Destiny -

שנת ז'ק"ק וזמן 1021.

A life of rounds! - Tension & Struggle & Suffering & Triumph -

We stand for a culture - a fighting culture - Challenger!
"Extremist" -

"The great man, the future... must necessarily be a criminal, a man who is the scourge of humanity, who in order to realize the expansion of his personality, needs great heartbreaks, in order to obtain his object" - Nietzsche -

"dehors ramm" - at expense of others!

- Jewish - a prophet-saint - healer, humanity - great
opportunities for service & self-sacrifice.

This is struggle! And in that struggle we are indefeatable!
Victories but no victory!

"And thou shalt be oppressed and robbed
All the time - and none to save thee

Thou shalt build a house, and thou shalt
not dwell in it

Thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt
not use the fruit thereof

Thy sons and thy daughters shall be
forced to remove to another people -
and thine eyes shall look, and fail
with longing for them all the day.

The Lord will bring a nation against thee
of fierce temper - which shall show no
compassion for old and young....
and he shall not leave thee corn, wine or oil -
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And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee,
and thou shalt fear night and day
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