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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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After the election - what?, 1940.

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AFTER THE ELECTION -- WHAT?

By  
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

On  
Sunday morning, November 14, 1940

At  
The Temple



So here we are, on the Sunday after election, and the American nation stands unshaken. Even after all the heat and fury of the election, the American people have resumed the even tenor of their lives. None of the dire forebodings have come true, and none are likely to come true. A people accustomed to one hundred and fifty years of elections took this election also in its stride. A people that has been so long accustomed to be admonished on the eve of every election to view with alarm the outcome of each election, discounted the alarm of this election also.

But if one had taken seriously all the hysterical electioneering which preceded last Tuesday, all the bitter denunciation, the threats, one should have expected, on election morning, a mob of people at every election booth armed with pitch-forks, axes or machine guns to save America. Actually fifty million people, approximately, lined up very quietly in a very free fashion for their voting, and voted with no riots, no bloodshed. And eleven o'clock in the evening, it was all over.

It was, in my humble judgment, an amazing exhibition of democracy at its best. And the people were better than their politicians. The people were far better than their professional campaign spokesmen and strategists. The people were far better than their newspapers. These, in many instances, lacked restraint, especially in this campaign, when there were so few vital issues actually involved. These spokesmen and campaign managers did try to arouse passions, fears and hates. There was a lot of serious talk about this being a crusade of one sort or another. They tried to exploit nationality and group fears and prejudices and resorted to a lot of vaudeville stunts and cheap circus showmanship. But the people, by and large, were not taken in, by these prophets of doom. They refused to be stampeded, and ~~xx~~ looked upon this election as just another election, each one expressing his convictions and preferences.



And it is interesting to note that some of these very spokesmen who during the campaign stopped at nothing, bawling about phrases like war-mongers, enemies of the American way of Life, that these have been the first since the election, to appeal to the victors for forbearance and magnanimity. Of course, the victors in the election, as in every election, should be generous, should be forbearing, should not gloat over their victory. It would have been good for the cause of America, generally, if these super-heated spokesmen in the campaign, either on the platform or in the editorial sanctuaries of their papers, had used a little more forbearance, and hit a little less below the belt during this campaign.

This is But the election, itself, was a magnificent thing, one of the few countries in the world left today where such an election could take place, where men are still free to express themselves, to criticize their public officials without fear of being spied upon, without fear of being sent to the concentration camp, where a citizen can call another citizen to an accounting and discuss with people policy, measure of law and program for the people. Ours is one of the few countries in the world left where by means of an election, people can serve notice upon public officials however highly placed, are still servants of the people.

This last election was not a phoney election, the kind of phoney elections that dictators put on, where only one candidate is to be elected - and of course that candidate receives ninety-nine and nine-tenths percent of the vote. In this election an astounding opposition of twenty-two million people said "no". There were twenty-six million people who said "yes". That is a majority. And on the basis of the democratic procedure, that majority has received the mandate to carry on its policies, without, however, either stamping out this minority, without outlawing it, crushing it, without even ignoring it. That great minority of twenty-two millions of American citizens remains as the government's loyal opposition, not to sabotage or conspire, but to remain as an active party



to criticize, to debate every measure, to act as a check, if necessary, on the government. It remains to carry on its education program and educational activities for its own philosophy of government among its people.

And this, my friends, is the critical difference between dictatorship and democracy. A dictatorship can not survive with an opposition party. Democracy can not survive without it. In the Mother of Parliaments", in Great Britain, the head of the opposition party is actually a handsomely paid official of the government.

President Roosevelt was re-elected, last Tuesday, by a substantial majority. Except for the Electoral College, it was far from being a landslide. There remained some forty-five percent of the electorate who indicated by their voting that they did not approve of his policies or of his re-election. They were good losers. They will not grumble and grouse. They will continue to be one hand. They recognize that a right has been given to the President to continue in office, that mandate has been given his policies. They themselves will continue to advocate their point of view in America. And to ignore them completely would be a great mistake and a blunder in a democracy, just as to yield to them completely would of course be a betrayal of the will of the majority.

Wise statesmanship will have to seek as far as possible to reconcile and to conciliate, find a middle course which will not ~~dis~~ disappoint the majority, and still not embitter this substantial minority. This will not be easy. But it is not impossible.

I believe that President has both the will and the capacity to seek just that middle course.

As far as our foreign policy is concerned, the last election gave a clear to the administration mandate/to go forward in his foreign policy. Both President Roosevelt and Mr. Willkie during the campaign called for rendering maximum aid to Great Britain in this desperate struggle. In the first statement following his defeat, Mr. Willkie repeated what he had said over and over again in the election. He hoped that during the coming



year America would render maximum aid to Great Britain in its war against the Nazi and Fascist barbarians. The Nazis, of course may have hoped for the defeat of President Roosevelt because they hate him most heartily. They would have received a little comfort in Willkie's position. Within three days after election, President Roosevelt announced, as he had every right to announce on the basis of the election, a policy of increased aid to Great Britain whereby that country will receive fifty percent of the armament in the United States.

England's brave resistance has thrilled the American people. Respect for England has mounted sky high in the last few months. Someone said that "not only England, but every Englishman is an island". He meant to suggest that each individual is insular, removed, but also unconquerable, that every individual is like its country. It can not be invaded. There is something magnificently stirring about their resistance. More than a hundred years ago, the great Emerson said: "The stability of England is the security of the modern world." He said that a hundred years ago and it is more valid today.

intends to  
The American people stand by England. The American people stand for a closer and ever closer program of unity and defense with Great Britain. That has been approved by fifty million voters in this last election.

The President has also received the unanimous mandate from the American people that he should go ahead with closer and ever closer ties with the Republics of South America, with his Good Neighbor Policy in this hemisphere. There is no room in this hemisphere anywhere for Nazis and Fascists. The American people have approved of President Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy.

It can not be said, however, that a similar unanimous approval has been given to the New Deal, and to the President's Domestic Policy. As I size up the situation, America is reaching out today for a middle ground between government control and private control of its national economy. If you bar the extremists on the right, the rugged individuals, and the extremists of



left, the socialists, the rank and file of the American people, both among the businessmen, laboring men and farmers, want a middle course. They don't want an economic regimentation at the hands of a bureaucracy in Washington. And on the other hand they don't want economic anarchy. They are afraid, and they are honestly afraid of too much government control. And they have every reason to be afraid because of what has transpired in the Old World, where every department of human life has been invaded by government and has enforced a rigid coordination. This has brought fear into the hearts of the American people. That is really their moral fear. They suspect that a government that gives too much, comes to take too much away from its people. It takes away that which is most precious to its people - namely, liberty. Only a totalitarian government can keep on handing out largess until it goes bankrupt. The American people do not wish a perpetual system of doles, even though doles and relief may be necessary for a period of years, long or short, but not indefinitely. The American people prefer the pay check to the relief check.

On the other hand, and I thrust aside again the extremist, - the American people are convinced as was Theodore Roosevelt in his day that "a great democracy must be progressive or it will soon cease to be great, or a democracy!" Social progress must be maintained. Constant adjustments must be made in a world shifting and changing so swiftly. The masses of the people are claiming, and will continue to claim a larger share of the social goods, and a greater measure of security in life. And they are entitled to them in a democracy. They will get them through communism, Fascism or democracy. If democracy fails them, they will try other techniques, even though other techniques have brought heretofore only gall and wormwood.

In other words, as I size up the situation, consciously or unconsciously, the American people are reaching out for a golden mean. The question is, can



America find it? I believe that President Roosevelt has tried, and will continue to try to find that golden mean. His speech<sup>es</sup> have at times been needlessly provocative, especially when goaded on by his political opponents. His speeches at times do suggest, and they do contribute to the sharpening of the class motif which has devastated the Old World. But his acts do not indicate that at all.

President Roosevelt is not a radical. He believes in the present economic structure. He believes in private enterprize. He believes in private property. He has no quarrel with legitimate profits of legitimate business, big or little. He has suggested no revolutionary chances in our American system.

That being the case, and I think his actions in the last few years have demonstrated this, I think American industrialists should cooperate with him in working out the necessary reforms which will help to strengthen this system, to make it more workable. Bitter, blind, hateful resistance on their part, or sabotage on their part will hurt them quite as much as anyone else. The Thyssens in Germany tried to circumvent the social reforms of their German Republic. They tried to curb the powers of organized labor, by resorting to ~~some~~ anti-democratic methods. They financed Hitler and the Nazis. They were fooled. The German people were betrayed by them. In their blind foolish eagerness to safeguard their own special privileges, the German people was betrayed into the hands of gangsters and war-makers.

Four hard trying testing years lie ahead for Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The Presidency in normal times is a gruelling office. It ages men. Today in times of war and danger, the Presidency of the United States is the most difficult job to fill. The White House today is the nerve center of the world. All the threads of destiny are gathered there and epochal decisions affecting generations yet unborn will be made by the President of the United States in the next few years. Fortunately for ~~the~~ America, and for us, President Roosevelt is a man of hardy constitution. He is inured to political controversy and conflict.



He has a saving sense of humor. He can take defeat and he can take victory.

He will have to plan, during the next few years, for the victory of civilization. He will have to plan for peace. He will have to plan for the reconstruction of the world after the war. He will have to plan for the reconstruction of America's domestic organization following the war, following the boom that the war may create. But it is clear that you not build a permanent prosperity on armament. You do not solve unemployment by arming men, and by conscription of men. Grave and difficult are the tasks which confront the President of the United States in the next few years! And in all our hearts, in the hearts of all who voted for and against him - for he is the President not only of the Democrats, but President of all other partisans in the United States - in all our hearts is a prayer for his continued health and for successful leadership of our beloved country, during the next four years.

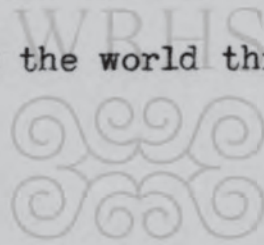
Franklin K. Lane who was Secretary of the Interior in the Cabinet of Wilson was a great admirer of Abraham Lincoln. And among the papers found after his death, there was the following written by Franklin K. Lane. I will read it to you.

"I never pass through Chicago without visiting the statue of Lincoln by St. Gaudens and standing before it for a moment uncovered. It is to me all that America is, physically and spiritually. I look at those long arms and long legs, large hands and feet, and I think that they represent the physical strength of this country, its power and its youthful awkwardness. Then I look up at the head and see qualities which have made the American -- the strong chin, the noble brow, those sober and steadfast eyes. They were the eyes of one who saw with sympathy and interpreted with common sense. They were the eyes of earnest idealism limited and checked by the possible and the practicable. They were the eyes of a truly humble spirit, whose ambition was not a love for power but a desire to be supremely useful. They were eyes of compassion and mercy and a



deep understanding. They saw far more than they looked at. They believed in far more than they saw. They loved men not for what they were but for what they might become. They were patient eyes, eyes that could wait and wait and live on in the faith that right would win. They were eyes which challenged the nobler things in men and brought out the hidden largeness. They were humorous eyes that saw things in their true proportions and in their real relationships. They looked through cant and pretense and the great and little vanities of great and little men. They were the eyes of an unflinching courage and an unfaltering faith rising out of a sincere dependence upon the Master of the Universe. To believe in Lincoln is to learn to look through Lincoln's eyes."

Our prayer is that the President of the United States will continue to look on his people and ~~on~~ the world through Lincoln's eyes.





Here we are -  
1) As I prophesied - Election is over - Amer. has survived!  
- After heart-fury - Am. people resumed even terror of their lives  
- Now, the dire forebodings has come true. - Likely to come true!  
A people accustomed to 150 yrs. of elections - took also this  
one in its stride. Had been accustomed so long to be  
asked "to view with alarm" - discounted again this year.  
If one had taken seriously - the hysterical electioneering - threats,  
raucous, bitter denunciations - "Life of America at stake"  
one <sup>should</sup> ~~might~~ have expected an Election Day - ~~men~~ <sup>mob</sup> armed  
with axes, <sup>pitch-forks</sup> machine guns and tear gas - determined to  
rip it out

Actually - 50 M - lined up exactly at tens, thousands,  
voted - friendly forbearance - no riots - no bloodshed!

Amazing exhibitions of decor. at its best!  
~~Hardly forgot Mr. Chamberlain in favor for Democrats!~~  
People better > professional politicians & campaign managers  
and strategists. <sup>Press</sup> back of Restaurant <sup>Graves</sup>  
passions, fears and hates! <sup>Silly talk about Europe</sup> Sought to  
Exploit nationality & group fears & prejudices  
Vanderbilt stunts - & cheap circus showmanship.

People were not taken in <sup>panic mongers</sup> & refused to be stampeded.

2) <sup>Some of the very</sup> ~~It was deplorable~~ that spokesmen orators stopped - Disclater  
and war-monger - now, that their side has lost, appeal  
for generosity and forbearance on the part of the victors. To  
be sure the victors should be forbearing and magnanimous  
for the sake of national unity - But it would have  
been highly desirable if they had remembered in the  
heat of battle to be a little more fair, not to hit  
below the belt - and to shoot so much venom  
and uncharitableness



3/ E. B. Tamm, itself, magnificent!

— One of very few countries left where such an election held.  
— Man free to express es- - cut - their SPY - call them  
to an accounting - discuss his rears of potholes,  
laws measures. Some rather that public  
Theraps, however highly placed, are still servants  
of the people.

— Not a phony election - Hittler - 999/10 - one candidate,  
large opposition vote cast - 2.2 M. - said no!

— But 26 M. said Yes - Majority - and by demer,  
process - it shall prevail - without, however,  
stamping out moment - crushing it - outlawing  
it - or even ignoring it.

— It remains - as the South loyal opposition - to not  
to sabotage, a corruption, but to offer contrasts,  
to keep a check on it - to keep alive its  
philosophy of just - its program - debated

— This is the critical difference - Dict. France

→ Dict. cannot move with an oppos. party  
without it.

Dem. " " "

In the "Mother of Parliaments" - the Head, the Opposition is Paul  
is actually a paid opinion, the Government.

4/ R. elected by handsome majority - no land-slide -

There remain 22 M. who for one reason or another  
did not approve of his potholes or of his re-election to a  
3rd term.  
They are good loans! They will not grouse! P.



- But They will continue to be on hand. - They recognize mandate has been given him to continue in this where - they will, in all good faith, continue to advocate their point of view.
- To ignore them completely would be a great mistake - a blunder in a democracy. To yield to them completely would be to betray the will of the majority.
- Our statesmanship will seek, as far as possible, to reconcile and conciliate - to find a middle course which will not disappoint the one or embitter the other. This will not be long - but it is not impossible!
- I believe that R. has the will & the capacity for it.

5. On foreign policy - clear mandate to go forward! Both R. & W. - came out for maximum and to allies. In his very first statement following election - W. - repeated.
- Nazis may have hoped for R's defeat - no comfort in W's position.
  - Within 3 days after election - R. announced 50-50
  - England's brave resistance - thrilled Americans
  - Respect for English - mounted sky-high -
  - "Not only England, but every Englishman is an island" - unlike, removed, but also un-invadable, unconquerable -
  - "The stability of England is the security of the modern world" - Emerson.
  - Am. people wish to stand by England!
  - Form closer & even closer ties of unity & defense
  - Approved!



b/. Closer ties with South Tropical America.

Common Hemisphere policy of defense - no room for Nazis!

The post-hegemon policy.

Approved.

7). It cannot be said that a similar unanimous approval has been given to the new Deal to its domestic policies.

- Amer. is reaching out for a middle ground bet. gov. control and private control of our nat. economy.

Barney the experiments on both sides - the "supposed" individuals - and the "socialists" - the same type, both among bus. men, labour men & farmers, want a middle course - no econ. regimentation by a bureaucracy in working hrs - and no cut-throat competition, no corporation control and no econ. anarchy

→ They are afraid, honestly afraid, too much so.

- I have every reason to - Abroad!

- I have every reason to - Abroad!
- a girl that gives too much - takes too much / Liberty!
- a girl that keeps too much - keeps on displeasing

- a girl that loves too much -
- Only a total girl can ~~never~~ keep on discovering
- land - out - until it is bankrupt!

→ Only a total. amt. can ~~be~~ keep on ~~the~~ largest and hand-outs - until it is bankrupt.  
→ They ~~don't want~~ a perpetual system <sup>and</sup> godas - Relief check to refinance check.  
→ on the other hand they are convinced as Thord. R. was that it will soon

→ On the other hand they are curved as shown.



If democratic fails then they will try <sup>in desperation</sup> the other methods - repairs,<sup>5</sup>  
the fact that the other methods have ~~failed~~ <sup>failed</sup> so far  
yielded nothing but fallacious word.

→ The Golden Mean! Can America discover it?

— I believe that R. is trying to. <sup>which is probably</sup>

→ His speech is at times recklessly <sup>by his speech</sup> provocative, sharpening  
the class-struggle motif which has devastated so many  
countries in last few years. But his acts have not  
been. Mr. R. is not a radical. He believes in private  
econ. structure. He believes in private enterprise and  
private property. He has no quarrel with legitimate profits  
& legitimate business, big or little. He has suggested no  
revolutionary changes in our econ. system.

Amer. individuals would do well to cooperate with him  
~~and~~ in working out the necessary reforms which will help  
to strengthen & consolidate the stability of our econ. system.  
Blind liter resistance or sabotage will hurt them as  
much as any one else.

The Thyssen, Germany find other ways to circumvent  
the social reforms, their German Republic, and to crush the  
power of org. labor. They were fooled, and the German people  
was betrayed into the hands of gangsters and war-makers.

8/ 4- hard-fighting - testing years he ahead for F.D.R.

— Presidency, in normal times, is a grueling office - it  
ages men.

— to-day - in times, World War - Turmoil - danger - is a  
crushing thing - most diff. job in the world.

The news-center, the world - threads of destiny  
are gathered there! Epochal decisions affecting  
lives, millions & generations yet unborn



Fortunately - Hardy Cuthbert - Inured to customary  
savvy sense of humor - Can talk victory & defeat.

- 9/ Will have to plan for Victory.  
" " " " for Peace  
" " " " for Reconstruction after war.  
" " " " ~~not~~ Econ. Reorgan. after ~~war~~ war boom.  
" You ain't build perm. prosperity on armament industry  
" " solve unemployment than army conscription  
10/ We pray for him in all hearts.

11/ Lincoln's eyes. May he see thru to eyes.

Franklin K. Lane - Secy / Interior in Wilson's Cabinet

Louise haunted Lane's imagination



Sermon 561

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE, ANSEL AND EAST 105TH STREET ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 10, 1940

### AFTER THE ELECTION - WHAT?

A people accustomed to a hundred and fifty years of elections, took also this one in its stride. If one had taken seriously the hysterical electioneering which preceded last Tuesday, one would have been led to expect on election morning in the various voting booths of the nation, mobs armed with pitch-forks, axes or machine-guns to save America. Actually, fifty million citizens lined up quietly and voted in a friendly fashion. There were no riots and no bloodshed. It was a remarkable exhibition of democracy at its best. Clearly the people were far better than their professional politicians who evidenced such amazing lack of ~~own~~ restraint, and who ~~extended~~ attempted to arouse passions, fears and hates, not to speak of the cheap circus showmanship to which some of them stooped. The people were not taken in by the panic-mongers, and refused to be stampeded. Unlike the phoney elections in the totalitarian states, the winning candidate did not receive ninety-nine and nine-tenths of the vote. Twenty-two million people said "No" to him and to one or another of his policies. This very substantial minority remains as the government's loyal opposition, not to sabotage or conspire, but to offer criticism and to keep alive its own conception of government.

This is the critical difference ~~of~~ between dictatorship and democracy. Dictatorship can not survive with an opposition party. Democracy can not survive without it.

To ignore completely the twenty-two million would be a great mistake. To yield to them completely would be to betray the will of the majority the will of twenty-six million Americans. Whsle statesmanship will attempt, as far as possible, to reconcile and to conciliate, to find a middle course which will not disappoint ~~destroy~~ the majority and which will not embitter the minority. This will not be easy. But it is not impossible. I believe that President Roosevelt has the will and the capacity to try for such a reconciliation.



The last election gave a clear mandate, an almost unanimous mandate to the President to go forward in his foreign policy. Both President Roosevelt and Mr. Willkie called for a maximum assistance to Great Britain. Americans have been thrilled by England's brave resistance in recent months, and respect for the English has mounted sky high. They wish to stand by England. And they favor closer ties of unity with that England of which, more than a century ago, Emerson said: "The stability of England is the security of the modern world."

There was a clear mandate to the President to go forward with his for a Good Neighbor policy in this hemisphere, and ~~his~~ policy of mutual defense among all the American republics.

It can not be said that a similar unanimous approval has been given to the New Deal, to President Roosevelt's domestic policy. American is reaching out for some middle ground between government control and private control of its national economy. They want social progress to be maintained and all necessary adjustments to be made which will give the masses of the people a larger share in the social goods and a greater measure of security. On the other hand, they are afraid, honestly afraid, of too much government, and of the economic regimentation of the nation by a bureaucracy in Washington. They have reason to fear that a government that gives too much comes to take too much, and that a government which sets out to dispense largesse ends up in bankruptcy and in dictatorship.

I believe that President Roosevelt is trying to find this golden mean. He believes in the present economic structure, in private enterprise, private property and the legitimate profits of legitimate business. He has suggested no revolutionary changes in our American system. American industrialists would do well to cooperate with him in working out those necessary reforms which will insure the workability of our economic system. Continued blind and bitter resistance will hurt them as much as any other group in the nation. The Thyssens of Germany can convince them of it.



Four hard, trying, testing years lie ahead for Franklin Delano Roosevelt. The presidency of the United States is today the nerve center of the world. Threads of destiny are gathered there. It is a crushing burden for any individual to bear. President Roosevelt will have to plan for the victory of the democratic forces in the next few years. He will have to plan for peace. He will have to plan for the world's reconstruction after the war. He will also have to plan for the economic reorganization of America's economy after the fictitious prosperity which will come as a result of our defense program.

Fortunately, President Roosevelt has been blessed with a sturdy constitution. He is inured to political controversy. He can take victory as well as defeat. He has a saving sense of humor.

All of us, no longer in the spirit of political partisans, but in the spirit of loyal Americans, pray honestly in our heart for his continued health and successful leadership of our beloved country.

