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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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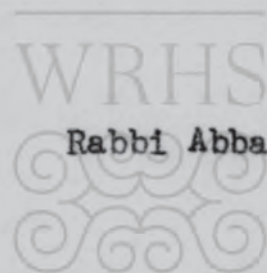
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The immortal story of the Greeks and the Jews, 1940.

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THE IMMORTAL STORY OF THE GREEKS AND THE JEWS



By

Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At

The Temple



On

Sunday morning, December 29, 1940



In the year 165 B.C.E. the Greeks were locked in a mortal combat with the Jews of Judea who were fighting each other. In the year 1940 of the Common Era, the Greeks and the Jews are united in a common struggle against a common foe who has threatened the existence of both of these peoples. What the Jews ~~xxx~~ were resisting in those distant days when they were attacked by Antiochus Epiphanes, is the same dark menacing thing which the Greeks and Jews are resisting today - aggression and totalitarianism.

Antiochus IV, Antiochus the Illustrious, head of a vast empire which included both Greece and Palestine as well as many other countries, was bent upon further conquest and was determined to coordinate his empire still further, to impose upon it an ancient "Gleichschaltung", to rivet upon <sup>the</sup> many peoples of his kingdom the iron bars of uniformity, cultural uniformity, religious uniformity as well as political submissiveness.

Antiochus of the Second Century before the Common Era no longer represented the free enlightened democratic and tolerant spirit of classic Hellas which had seen its golden age some three hundred years before his day. The Greece of the Age of Pericles, perhaps the greatest age mankind has ever witnessed -- that age which produced a whole galaxy of dynamic men in every field of human endeavor -- Phichas, Socrates, Herodotus, Sophicles -- that age belongs in the past.

Greece of the Age of Antiochus Epiphanes was a conquered country which constituted a part, and only a small part of a great empire which had been carved out of the vast empire which Alexander the Great had created.

The Hellenistic culture and civilization which Antiochus Epiphanes represented, while it still possessed much of the color and brilliance of the Hellenic culture of the great days of Greece, nevertheless lacked much of ~~the~~ greatness and originality, of fine balance, of intellectual and artistic . The Hellenistic culture of the Second Century was somewhat decadent. It represented paganism in its decline.

And politically, it represented something which was anti-Greek in spirit - the principle of absolute monarchism and the principle of subjugation through



the imperialism of other people.

The Jews of the Second Century were not impervious to the fascination of Hellenistic culture. They recognized and acknowledged and paid tribute to the artistic and intellectual tradition of the great Greek culture. Many Jews at that time, even in Palestine, spoke Greek. The great Jewish community in Alexandria and in Egypt were saturated with Greek culture. In fact, after the First Century B.C.E. the Bible is said to have been translated for the Jews into Greek because that was the speech of their daily lives. The Jews were not averse to adopting Greek manners, Greek dress.

But the best among them also knew that in their own Jewish culture, in their profoundly religious monotheistic culture, there were spiritual and moral values which were decidedly superior to the moral values in Hellenism. They were convinced that the world needed Jewish contribution just as much as it needed Greek contribution.

So when Antiochus Epiphanes called on all the people of his empire to leave his law and his faith, when he called on every people to surrender its own culture, the Jews alone among all the heathen people of those days, refused. No pagan ever died for his religion. All the other peoples were polytheistic. They were pagan, idolatrous. The Jews alone were monotheistic. So that while all the other people yielded readily to the principle of coordination, the Jews resisted. When they resisted, Antiochus Epiphanes ordered suppression. He forbade the observance of the Sabbath or holidays. He forbade the teaching of Judaism in the schools. He burned Jewish books. He set up altars and shrines of Jupiter Olympus in the most sacred shrine of Israel. He erected local shrines to local deities all over Palestine. He reinstituted many of those licentious rituals which had existed in the early days and he decreed death to all who disobeyed.

The Jews disobeyed. They resisted. They revolted. The few against the many. They fled into the mountains. They were hunted. They were harassed. A



price was put on their heads. They knew they were outnumbered. They knew that the contest was unequal. But they also knew that the soul of the race had been exalted. They knew that the soul was something worth fighting for. That is an inescapable challenge that can not be ignored whether you are few or whether you are many. Whether you are sure of victory<sup>or</sup>/of defeat -- fight you must! They also believed as their forefathers before them, and their descendants since, that with God it is all one to help with many or with few. So they waged at first a guerrilla warfare. They attacked small outposts and they joined battle at first with smaller units and then with larger units. Before each battle, their great and inspired leader, Judah the Maccabee, strengthened their spirit, inspired and encouraged them and admonished them and said: "Fear ye not their multitude!"

And the story of Chanukah is the story of how the spirit triumphed over force, and how the weak in number but strong in faith triumphed over those strong in number but weak in faith. The eternal miracle happened as it frequently happened. The little people triumphed over the great people.

That, my friends, is the immortal story of Israel through the ages. Chanukah is but one incident in that long millennial story, and the triumph of the Maccabees, the triumph of the few over the many is but one in a series of triumphs. The same story can be told of Egypt, Assyria and Babylon, and Rome and Spain and Czarist Russia. It will be the same triumph of the few against the many in the ultimate triumph over Hitlerism.

Now the interesting thing about it is that this is the same immortal story of the Greeks. The valor of the Greeks in 1940 which has evoked the admiration and acclaim of all the civilized world - what remains of the free world of mankind -- is the same valor of that little people of more than one hundred years ago when it fought for its political independence against vast and overwhelming odds. It is the same quality of valor and heroism which this same little people manifested



many many centuries ago -- twenty-five hundred years ago, when it resisted the vast Persian Empire and forced it back into the Orient.

The Greeks, too, like the Jews, have always been a small people. And they always inhabited, like the Jews in Judea, a small little country. Today their population is no more seven million and they live within an area of fifty square miles, only one-fifth is arable. Yet these two small peoples, inhabiting small spots on the face of the earth, politically weak -- these two people molded the civilization of mankind. The Greeks, like the Jews, were politically free only for a relatively short time in their long history. The Greeks lived under the yoke of foreign conquerors and oppressors for many many generations. And the Greeks knew persecution, and massacre and refugees, like the Jews.

And the Greeks, today, in 1940, like the Jews, are fighting desperately for their national survival. They both have the same foe. Nazism, Fascism, is seeking to destroy them as it is seeking to destroy the Jews. The Greeks are fighting today with a dauntlessness of spirit which might well serve as an example for us Jews, a dauntlessness of spirit which is reminiscent to the spirit of the Maccabees, and of others of their great heroes of their golden past -- Leonidos, Miltiades, Aristides.

The few against the many. Think of it! Mussolini sent his vast cohorts his highly advertised invincible army which was to conquer the world into Greece and was trapped... And those vast cohorts were beaten into <sup>a</sup>shameless headlong run by the forces of little Greece - so much so that this Duce, this miniature Napoleon of the Twentieth century now has to call in Nazi troops to help him crush the little people of Greece.

What a victory of the few against the many! What a victory for spirit, and daring and courage! What a victory for humanity!

This triumph of the spirit of modern Greece and Albania will take its place, my friends along with all the great Greek victories of the past, and along with the Marathon , and along with the victory~~s~~ of



of a handful of Spartans, three hundred in number, who defied a vast army of Persia and said: "They shall not pass!" The modern victories of the Greeks will take their place along with Salamis and . Their story will go down in history with that story which was taught to us when we studied the History of Greece during our college days - the story of how a small number of Greeks who found themselves in Mesopotamia fought to the Black Sea their way/across the mountains, deserts through hostile tribes without any guides, without any food until they reached the sea.

Regardless of what the future holds for the Greeks, for the war is not yet ended -- regardless of what may take place <sup>an</sup> in/attempt to crush their indomitable spirit -- what has already taken place remains history. It is those great moments that history treasures. In the last two months, the Greeks have revealed again their immortal spirit of old. It has kindled torches in the world which have never been extinguished.

Byron spoke of Greece as "A sad relic of departed worth". Were Byron living today he would not speak of Greece as a sad relic of departed worth. Poe would not speak of the "Glory that was Greece" - he would, I am sure speak of the glory that is Greece.

The Greeks are an amazing little people. Throughout their history, from the very beginning, they loved freedom passionately. They were mountain-bred like the Judeans of old. They were strong individuals. They still are. They knew how to die for freedom. They were not interested merely in political freedom. They were interested far more in what is their greatest gift to mankind -- in intellectual things. The Greeks of old were the real intellectual adventurers. It was they who removed the dark veils of ignorance. IT was they who kindled the spirit of free inquiry in mankind. It is they more than any other people who tried to understand the world about them and the world inside of them, who



tried to work out a richer way of living. Wherever this influence of the Greek mind, Greek thought, penetrated in the ancient world or in the medieval world there followed science, art literature and the gracious ways of humanism. And wherever this spirit of the Greeks was stamped out in the world there followed darkness, obscurantism, bigotry and the collapse of civilization.

The Greeks, and this is said not at all in hypoberle, but in truth -- way be said to be the light-bringers of humanity. You know the story of Prometheus -- how the Gods took away fire from the earth and how Prometheus climbed the heavens and stole fire from the chariot of the sun and brought it down to earth. And the ~~animated~~ clay of the first man and woman on this earth was animated with the fire stolen from the heavens. Prometheus was punished for his audacity. He was left to the vultures to feed upon him. Prometheus brought fire and light -- that is the spirit of Greece. Light in the dark places.

You will recall, I am sure that very interesting story about Diogenes, that celebrated cynic philosopher. One day the great Alexander who had heard of the fame of this great philosopher called upon him and said to him: "How can I serve thee?" And Diogenes answered. Please step out a little away from the light. Even the conquerors of the earth dare not stand in the light. Alexander who had in mind the great spirit of Greece thought his teacher was Aristotle. Alexander is quoted as having said: "If I were not Alexander I would be Diogenes". These little anecdotes reveal the spirit of a people.

Now this Diogenes was told when he came to the famous Antisthenes who was head of a school of philosophy to go away. He was driven away and beaten when he asked if he could go to school. Diogenes calmly bore the rebuke and said: "Strike me Antisthenes, but never shall you find a stick sufficiently hard to remove me from your presence, whilst there is anything to be learnt, any information to be gained from your conversation."

Over the entrance of the Temple of Apollo were inscribed the words: "Know Thyself". And it is <sup>to</sup> ~~of~~ this thirst <sup>of the Greeks</sup> for knowledge, for knowing, that civilization is



indebted. In Philosophy, in Science, in the Arts, in Literature, in almost every field it was they who laid the groundwork. It was they who defined the problems. It was they who suggested the answers. It was they who created enduring types - the form, style of poetry, drama, history, sculpture, architecture. They taught men to think richly, how to think critically, how to think creatively and how to express his intellectual and emotional life beautifully. It was they who taught mankind that "truth is beauty and beauty is truth".

Israel had that same thirst for knowledge with a slightly different emphasis. The emphasis with Israel was the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of the ways of God. Over the shrines and synagogues of Israel were inscribed not "Know thyself" but "Know before whom thou standest". The emphasis in Israel was upon ethics, morality, upon conduct, upon sanctification of life, upon justice, mercy, kindness and love, upon, brotherhood and peace.

Greek thought and Hebraic thought make up the perfect synthesis of the world. Some day that perfect synthesis will be achieved. And these two peoples, through their two distinctive emphases - the Jews through religious emphasis, through Judaism, and through its daughter religion, Christianity and in a sense also Mohammedanism mold the moral life of the modern world; and the Greeks through intellectual, scientific study and philosophy also mold monumentally the modern World. From the days of Omar to this day the Greek influence has continued in one form or another. Either it was the classic influence or the influence of Hellenism. For seven hundred years after Alexander the Greeks influenced the culture and language of the Eastern and Medieval world - whether it was in the early knowledge of Christianity - for great is the influence of Greek thought upon early Christian thought, whether it was in Roman civilization which was influenced in its art and literature, whether it was in the Byzantine period or whether it was in the Renaissance period - whatever period mankind returns to, Greek thought kindled the torches of enlightenment in the Western World and ended the dark ages of the Western World and to it mankind owes its eternal debt.



Today that little country is fighting for its very life just as it did one hundred and twenty years ago. It is being helped now, just as it was one hundred and twenty years ago by the English and it has the profound sympathies of the Jewish people. The Jewish people have lived in Greece for thousands of years. The New Testament speaks of Jewish synagogues in Athens and . In Twelfth Century reports that many Jews lived in Greece at that time. We have no record of persecution of Jews in Greece at the hands of the Greeks.

Not far from Greece ~~today~~ not far from the Blue Aegean Sea is Palestine and the Jewish Pioneers there by the sweat of their blood and labor are endeavoring to rekindle there torches of the culture of ancient Greece. The Jews of Palestine recently sent salutations and greetings to the people of Greece and the Greek people acknowledged the greeting. And I quote from the "Accropolis", one of their famous newspapers:

"In Greece, the homeland of freedom and religious tolerance, anti-Semitism never aroused an echo in Greek hearts, consequently the felicitations from Jews in Palestine have been received joyously because we know that the felicitations are sincere.

"Greece is one of the few countries where the sorely-tried children of Israel always have found asylum, justice and civic equality. Today many Jews are fighting in Greece against Fascism and many Jews are ~~fighting~~ among the heroic dead. The Greek struggle will contribute incidentally to the freedom of the Jews from persecution and to the eradication of anti-Semitism."

Thus the spirit of Judah the Maccabee salutes the spirit of . And our prayer on this Festival of Lights is a devout prayer ~~in which~~ that the spirit of Jerusalem may triumph in the world again against brute force and darkness and that these two small nations who have for ~~centuries~~ thousands of years molded the civilization of the Western World, continue to kindle lights in the world.

THIS SIDE OF CARD IS FOR ADDRESS



WRHS



**Marvin Krichman**

**3370 Tullamore Road**

**Cleveland Heights, Ohio**



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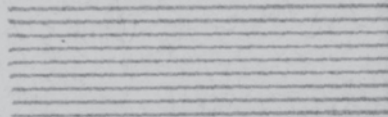
THIRTY - EIGHTH

ANNUAL

WRHS



REUNION



under his com-  
inaugural a  
initiation of a new weekly  
program in this city for the  
The main address at the broadcast

## **Greetings From Palestine Jews Enthusiastically Received in Greece**

Athens (WNS)—The greetings forwarded by Palestine's Jews to the embattled Greeks fighting off an Italian invasion were received with enthusiasm throughout Greece. One newspaper, Acropolis, said editorially:

"In Greece, the homeland of freedom and religious tolerance, anti-Semitism never aroused an echo in Greek hearts, consequently the felicitations from Jews in Palestine have been received joyously because we know that the felicitations are sincere.

"Greece is one of the few countries where the sorely-tried children of Israel always have found asylum, justice and civic equality. Today many Jews are fighting in Greece against Fascism and many Jews are among the heroic dead. The Greek struggle will contribute incidentally to the freedom of the Jews from persecution and to the eradication of anti-Semitism."

was delivered by Lieutenant-General Philip Neome, general officer commanding Palestine and Transjordan, who characterized the eminently successful British Egyptian campaign as "a large nail in Benito

(Continued on Page 8)

» Please make \_\_\_\_\_ member reservations  
35c per plate if this reservation card is mailed before December 27th,  
otherwise 50c per plate.

» \_\_\_\_\_ non-member reservations  
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for the TAA Annual Collegiate Reunion

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_



The Temple Alumni Association will have its

**ANNUAL COLLEGIATE REUNION**

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29th, 1940 . . .**

**10:30** Youth Services in the Temple conducted by Rabbi Silver,  
to be followed by a visit with the Rabbis in the Parlor.

**1:15** Good-fellows Dinner in the Euclid Room, Hotel Statler.  
Luncheon entertainment by Eunice Podis, pianist and Donald  
Dewhurst, baritone.

**3:00-5:00** Tea-Hopping with Chuck Wick's Orchestra.

Please send MAILING CARD or CALL The TEMPLE for RESERVATIONS







The Jews of the 2c. were not inferior to the population (2)  
of Hell. They acknowledged the great artistic instilling  
traditions which it carried. Many, themselves spoke Greek and  
of Alexander. Adapted of manner. Wore dress.

But they knew that they in their monstrous culture - there were sp &  
moral values - which were superior - world needed them as  
much as world needed - art - sc. liter & phil. of Greece. These  
they would not surrender -

When ∴ A.E. called upon all the people, his answer -  
"Every one should have his cause & his faith" - they alone  
among all heathen peoples refused. No pagan ever died  
for his religion. They were all fully there - idolaters - then  
moral code, pretty much the same. - They yielded readily  
to circumcision. They resisted - A. forbade observing  
Sabbath, Festivals. Trilode Temple services to teach  
of Judaism in the schools. He burned of books - Set  
up altars & thrones of idols all over Pal - held his rituals -  
Decreed death to those who deserted!

Renet - "The few against the many - harassed - hunted  
with a price upon their heads. Unequal contest!"

Some of the Race - some thing worth fighting for!  
Outnumbered - doomed - Unescapable challenge! - cannot ignore!

"With God - it is all one to help with many or with few"

Guerrilla warfare - attacked small outposts - number few -  
Joined battle at last with smaller units - other larger -



Judah - before each battle - "For ye not this multitude!"  
Spirit triumphed over force. Weak in us. but strong in  
faith triumphed over strong in us but weak in faith.  
The Eternal Miracle!

The one who could become 2 the next day...

Immortal story of Israel their eyes - One over again -  
great empires - Egypt Assy. Bab. Pers. - Spain +  
Greece - now Nazi Germany -

2/ <sup>this is</sup> Also immortal story of Greece. The valor of Greece  
1940 - is marked by valor - 1820 - is marked  
by valor - in resisting vast Persian Empire nearly  
2500 yrs. ago -

3/ Always a small people - like Israel - inhabiting a small  
country like Judea. To-day pop - no more 717 - Area 50 sq.

under only 1/5 arable - small - materially poor  
these 2 small people <sup>pop. weak - numerically small - materially poor</sup> withdrew the bulk of the world!

They were pol. free, like Israel, only for a relatively short  
time - They were under the yoke of foreign conquerors  
for most of their history: like the Jews they know bitter  
persecutions, + massacres, through the ages -

And like the Jews they are <sup>again</sup> in the most of a life  
and death struggle again for their nat. survival  
Fascism is seeking to destroy them - as it is seeking  
to destroy us -



And they are pulling back - with a herosm - a dauntless (4)  
which might well serve as an example to us - unimpaired  
of the quality of the Maccabees - of their men great  
heroes; their golden part - Leonidas, Nietodes,  
Aristides.

4/ The Few against the Many! Muss's cohorts - his vast -  
+ loudly-advertised "invincible" army - broken into  
a shameful, headlong route - by force of ally  
Greece! Has to call in Nazi troops to save  
himself - little piece!  
What a victory for the "Few against the Many!"  
What " " for Spirit - Pluck - Faith - Courage -  
What " " for Humanity!

5/ G. Scrambles in Albania - take their place  
along with Marathon - Thermopylae + Salamis.  
and Plataea  
- Anabasis 401 - March to Black Sea - germs - No Guides - Maps - Beavers - food - Map - Army - Crazy  
Reparations of turkey. Her reman - Perseus  
monument art. which history is threatened!

9 has unleashed again its immortal spirit  
which blazed across history in knobbed  
trunks in the world which have never been  
extinguished.

} "Sad relic of departed worth" - Byron  
} "The glory that was gone!"



6/ Loved Freedom - Strong individualists - Wanton - but - all judicious (5)  
- a hard suggested role -

Know how to die for freedom -

- Not only pol. freedom - but even more Intellectual Freedom

They were real intell. adventures / manhood - opened up  
dark continents - removed just dark veils.

They kindled the spirit of free inquiry in manhood  
Tried to understand the world and man / How to live rationally  
Wherever g. influences penetrated in the ancient and medieval  
world there followed sciences - philus - art - and the various  
ways of humanism.

Wherever it was stamped out - there followed darkness -  
obscurantism - bigotry and the collapse, Archzait.

7/ They were the light-burgers! House there - Guns took  
away fire from earth - P. climbed the heavens - stole fire from the  
chariot of the sun, brot it down to earth - Riveted to  
can canes - vultures feed upon him - Animated clay  
of first man turned upon earth - with fire stolen from  
heaven.

Light! Diogenes - celebrated Greek philosopher - Tab - condemned to Rome  
Alexander - how he could serve him

Μικρὸν ἔπ' ὁ τοῦ ἡλίου μετ' ὀψινοῦ

"If I were not Alexander, I would be Diogenes."

- Disciples, Antisthenes - and, the Greeks - refused to admit him -  
struck him with stick - calmly bore the rebuke:

"Strike me Antisthenes, but never shall you find a stick sufficiently  
hard to remove me from your presence, whilst there is anything to be  
learnt, any information to be gained, from your conversation."



8/ Thirst for Knowledge - Over entrance of Apollo's Temple at Delphi -  $\lambda\upsilon\omega\theta\epsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon\tau\omicron\upsilon$ .

Carved new highways for man - ~~Founded~~ in Philosophy in Psychology - Sciences - Art - Literature - In every field. They laid ground work - They defined problems - They outlined solutions - They created the <sup>beginning</sup> types - the steps - the forms of poetry - drama - <sup>history</sup> sculpture - architecture.

9/ They taught man how to think rationally, urgently, creatively - and how to express his instincts and emotional life freely and beautifully.  
+ Prof. Gardner: 8 Notable Features of Es. Art ① Humanism ② Simplicity ③ Balance ④ Naturalism ⑤ Ideals ⑥ Patience ⑦ Joy ⑧ Fellowship.  
10/ Man had same thirst for Knowledge and his Moral Law.

Emphasis - ethics, morality - Anticipation of life.  
Together - they would form the superior synthesis.

11/ Man, then the rel. & moral impressed story indubitably upon Art. Workers held - then they cherished it with - it was a monumental piece apart in the history of modern world.

Greece - then the greatest art Philosophy - was the twofold influence. Without it modern Art is inconceivable. Civilization of East Med - and as perfect as Euphrates was for 700 Yrs after Alexander



Helene. Roman Civilization - saturated.

Byzantine - Christian - Early Ch. Hist. That & spoke

Medieval Ages - Scholasticism - Aristotle

Renaissance - To this day.

12/ Eternal Light - little people - now fighting for the  
sympathies of world - 1820 - English - Byronic  
Jewish - no persecutions - earliest times - ~~as~~ N.T.  
DIXON & Byronic - 12C

13/ In Pal. - not far from Blue Room - J. proves -  
Revelation traces - Jerusalem - Athens - mother  
(note)

14/ May the Spirit of J. Platters Lucian & Olympos  
Innkeeper - But free - Darkness -  
Kindle light