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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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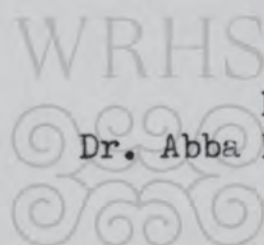
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The road away from disaster, 1941.

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THE ROAD AWAY FROM DISASTER  
Is There Time Left?



By  
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver



At  
The Temple

On  
Sunday Morning, May 11, 1941



Men are living today in a world of tension. Men are experiencing somehow a sense of living on the edge of things, as if mankind were near some brink, some abyss, some catastrophe. It is not clear just what it they experience... They are moving along a road. Many fear what lies at the end of that road.

What is this road. Whither does it lead? What is it that we are really afraid of? Our Age has been experiencing a prolonged crisis. We are in the midst of a long agony. Our economic system, private capitalism, seems to be breaking up into a new form. It seems to be giving way to something else just as feudalism at the close of the Middle Ages broke up into new forms. And the transition today is not only as violent as it was then, but even more violent.

Our industrial and financial capitalism which gave us in the modern world, which created so much good, such great wealth and which raised the standard of living for such large segments of humanity has also brought with it many grave and seemingly insoluble problems - the maldistribution of wealth, the economic insecurity of the masses, war and bitter class struggle. In the last few decades our democratic forms of life and our liberal attitudes towards life have been unable to resolve these great difficulties, to solve this bitter class struggle, the struggle between those who have too much and those who have too little, the struggle for a better and a more secure way of life for all. And in some countries the people have resorted to anti-democratic and anti-liberal procedure in a desperate effort to solve this problem. All forms of dictatorship have been convened or improvised in recent years and these new procedures, many of them have been rationalized into outrageously immoral doctrines such as the doctrine that might makes right, such as the doctrine of the master people and the slave people, the doctrine of racism. These doctrines have been put into practise and their methods have been methods of liquidation, of annihilation, punitive methods of all kinds -



terror, inquisition.

This new improvisation has also disrupted our national life. It has destroyed the League of Nations. In place of a federated, cooperative world, there has taken place fragmentization, disintegration such as the Western World has not experienced in a thousand years.

These dictatorial systems now speak of a new order which is to replace the old order. But this new order contemplates not the federation of free peoples for mutual protection and well-being, but the forceful coordination of conquered and subjugated peoples into a Germanic scheme, into a new economic order which will be dominated by Germany and which will exist to serve the ends of Germany. This new order contemplates the division of the world into a new balance of power or into a new unbalance of power. On the one hand the Axis of dictatorship. on the other hand the Anglo-Saxon people and their friendly Allies.

Were this war now raging to end tomorrow in a stale-mate, in a so-called negotiated peace as some prominent American had advocated, were the new order to be established in Europe, war would be resumed the next day, the next month, or the next year for all the war-fomented issues would be left unsolved and the nations of the world would proceed to arm themselves more and more vigorously than they did after the last World War. For this new order of the Nazis and of the Fascists <sup>is</sup> a fraudulent socialism.

The Nazis and the Fascists in their early propaganda used the term socialism and some of the socialist phrases as a facade, as a means to fool, to beguile the masses. These movements were in their inception motivated by definite anti-social trends and forced upon them by the logic of events, the exigencies of rearmament and the demands of war and have forced upon these countries extreme forms of economic state control. So that in these



countries -- Italy, Germany -- while private capitalism and forms of private capitalism have not been outlawed, as in the Soviet, they are no longer as significant as they were and both Mussolini and Hitler feel justified in representing themselves as the enemies of democratic capitalism and plutocracy and the champions of socialism. But their socialism is utterly unlike the proletarian socialism of the Soviet. It is a socialism under which the middle classes still hope to thrive, to resume after the war its free life and the profit system and the accumulation of private wealth. And this inner contradiction with Fascist and Nazi states which they seek to cover up by the term the "new order" has not been resolved and is likely to create a crisis within those states after a while. Nor has the sharp distinction between Nazi socialism and the Soviet smug proletariat type of socialism been obliterated. And these contrasting convictions, both calling themselves socialism will ultimately lead to another conflict. So that when the Nazis and Fascists speak of a new order, the question is: Which new order? Theirs? Or the New Order of the Soviets? So that there will be two new orders in Europe, perhaps there will be a third if the Anglo Saxon economic regimen survives.

The term the "new order" therefore, ought not to mislead us. And we ought not to confuse it with the poetic concept of "waves of the future". These are not waves of the future. These are the roiling and the confusion of the social and economic thought of the world of which there is, as yet, no clear trend and no sure direction.

But our civilization is moving steadily into the direction of greater socialization. That goes without saying. That went on to a degree before the World War but has been accelerated since the World War. One hundred and



fifty years of democratic education and emphasis on the Rights of Man, that is all rights of all men, have predisposed mankind to forms of socialized economy. Capitalism itself prepared the way for it. Insofar as capitalism insisted on the rights of the individual, against the interference of the State in the economic life of the people, insofar as capitalism stressed liberalism and democracy, principally in government it paved the way for socialization. The masses of the earth have learned how to use the instruments of democratic government to achieve what they believe inevitable -- the development of corporate industry, the organization of labor.

Modern capitalism has brought about vast conflicts between vast powerfully organized units to which society itself dare not remain indifferent. The great problem which modern capitalism has created -- not intentionally, not willfully -- but as a by-product, is very large-scale unemployment, periods of depression, insecurity, maldistribution, maladjustment, even as it produced great wealth and a higher standard of living for large segments of society. And also war.

All these problems capitalism is not able to solve without the aid of government. Now the desirable extent of governmental aid, governmental control, supervision, of governmental ownership, the desirable extent has not yet been determined and cannot be determined academically and universally. And those countries which try to approach the problem dogmatically, overnight, as it were, outlawing capitalism, liquidating the middle classes, those countries have not only not ushered in the millennium, but have created a new set of social evils which grievously affect their people -- the suppression of liberties, frightful regimentation of people, the outlawing of free education, free speech, terror. It will take generations of experimentation, to find the right form. And the right form may not be the self-same form



for every country and for every people. There are many types of monarchies. There are many types of democracies. The physical factors of a country, the historical background of a people, spiritual factors will enter into the final arrangement which people will wish to adopt for themselves. And so the ultimate solution depends definitely and inevitably on free experimentation with forms of economic life. But free experimentation is impossible without free government. Therefore tyrannical types of governments, dictatorships those of like/Berlin, Rome and Moscow far from represent the waves of the future and definitely represent waves of the past and are obstacles in the way of solving the problem of the free socialized community of tomorrow.

The "new order" of Germany, for example, is just an imperial fraud just as anti-communism was a fraud, just as their racial concept of state has been proved to be a fraud, because he discarded it as soon as he had reached the desired limits of the German Reich and had decided to reach out and go beyond. When the Nazis talk about a "new order" which they seek to establish in Europe which will last for a thousand years, they haven't the slightest conception of what they mean except that the Germans will sit on top of the world and the rest of the world will work for them.

What we are therefore afraid of almost instinctively is this road which has been leading to the technique of dictatorship, that is to say, to a materialistically conceived and coercively executed technique of social reconstruction. That is the road to slavery. And the road away from disaster is definitely the road back to the method of democracy, to the spiritually ed conceiv and voluntarily conceived technique of social reconstruction.

And there is still time to turn away from the road which leads to disaster.

When I say the road back to democracy, I do not mean the road back to a



democracy which has made possible not consciously, but unconsciously so many of the evils which now threaten its survival. I mean a dynamic democracy. I mean a democracy not afraid to experiment, not hostile to new ideas. I mean a democracy not afraid of the people, not afraid of the future. I mean a democracy which will welcome honest research, which will adopt a courageous program of steady, constant improvement of social life, which will brush aside relentlessly all those forces which continuously try to exploit it, a democracy which will advance steadily to greater social justice and fairer distribution of social goods. In other words, democracy, if it is to save mankind from disaster must become an intelligent crusade for a better way of life for all people. What we are to preserve is not necessarily the American way of life, but a better American way of life.

A democracy cannot long rest on slogans, on under-privileged children, on helpless men and women, on underpaid workers, on unsheltered old folks, on hopeless youth. Such a democracy is not worth saving. A free people seeking earnestly the good life for all, through voluntary and cooperative efforts within the framework of a free and effective government, that is via salutis, that is the road away from disaster. That requires sacrifice, discipline, effort, courage. That implies not merely what was vital fine in the past, the way is what is vital in the future.

All this means Religion. All this represents the great goals which Religion has set for mankind almost from the beginning of time. Because civilization in the last few decades has lost these great goals, human progress has lost its sense of direction and it has also lost the method for real human progress. All this has been talked about -- man's rediscovery of prophetic religion which is made up of those things and those things only -- God and Justice, and Justice and God. God without justice is blasphemy, and



justice without God is illusory. No free society can long remain free and Godless. This is not preaching. This is history. An old friend of democracy, a free critic of the early American democracy admonished the American people a long time ago. He said: "Despotism may govern without Faith - but liberty cannot."

We are losing our liberties in the world because we have lost our faith. We have lost it individually and we have lost it collectively. We put out faith not in God, but in the laboratory, in science, machines, in the protection of wealth and we thought that would give us prosperity and happiness in the world. They have given us the kind of a world which we have -- unhappiness, insecurity, war.

Democracy must rediscover prophetic religion to save itself and to save mankind. That is equally true of the Jewish people. There is only one road for us away from disaster and that is the road that leads toward God. We have entered upon an age of persecution and martyrdom and we do not know how long that age will last. Whither shall we turn? To what philosophy of life shall we go for refuge? Where are we to find our for us and our children strength/~~and our~~ to endure whatever the future holds for us?

Humanity has sickened of its Godless civilization. Because the spiritual interpretation of human destiny was allowed to languish, other interpretations have come to life and are now driving mankind mad. For when God is dethroned, His throne does not remain empty for long. Some false God, some Wotan, Moloch, Mammon or Mars soon occupies it. In place of piety, reverence, humility, compassion, self-sacrifice, other qualities-in-solence, cruelty, aggression and combativeness -- come to be extolled. Because men rejected the ideal of the sanctification of human life under God, they now have a world in which human life is held cheap, in which the stature of the



individual has been reduced, his rights usurped by the state, his labor looked upon as a commodity and his life just a statistical item. Because men ignored the sovereignty of God's Moral Law, they now have a world in which men, parties and governments have set themselves up above all law. Where there is no longer the Law of God, there ensues the law of the Duce, the Fuehrer, or the Commissar, before which all men must tremble.

Now that lights are going out everywhere in the world, men are turning again to the Light of God. By that light men will find their way to a kingdom of just human values, achieved through just human methods. They will no longer seek freedom through slavery, justice through class-struggle, abundance through ~~slavery~~ confiscation, knowledge through the burning of books, or unity through blood-purges and liquidations.

Jews can do no less. We sense an incoming tide of faith among our people, a faith charged in some instances with deep mysticism. It should not surprise us and it would be in keeping with similar moments in our past history, if our age should witness a strong mystic movement among our people. Such mystic movements followed the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal at the close of the fifteenth century and the appalling disasters which overtook Polish Jewry in the seventeenth century. The present-day expulsions of the Jews, the tragic experiences of myriads of refugees, the dismal plight of war-ravaged Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe, the stress under which Israel finds itself everywhere, coupled with the distressed mood of mankind generally, may give rise to a strong mystic movement which will express itself in religion and literature and in personal habits of thought and conduct.

Whether it does or not, that only the future can tell. This is crystal clear - that the salvation of the Jewish people along with the salvation of mankind lies in a return to the living waters of God, a God of freedom,



a God of Truth, a God of Justice; a God who is the Friend of every man.









resum the free life - and the profit system - and the accumu-<sup>(2)</sup>  
lation / private wealth. This new combination has not  
been resolved. And the sharp distinction bet. this type of  
pseudo-soc - & that of Savant has also not been obliterated.  
The carbonizing economy, the slave & the wage system  
have not been adjusted, and one can foresee an inevitable  
crash. Hages & Jos. may talk of a new order for an -  
but what New Order? The Germanic or the Slavic? Or are  
there to be two New Orders? Or rather three, if the Anglo-  
Japan order survives.)

2/ that the world is moving steadily towards greater soc.  
 for with out saying - 150 yrs. of devot. educat. & prepared  
 ground for it - Our popular education - our wide-spread  
 systems of communication - ~~Mass. has been to demand -~~ <sup>in public life</sup> have instrument  
 for liberalism, & the insistence on curbing the state & giving  
 the ind. - maximum freedom - has made it inevitable. The  
 devel. of corporate industry - finance - org. labor - Trusts  
 towards which we cannot be indifferent - Mod. Cap. has  
 produced econ. misceant & unemployment - & mal-  
 distribution - even as it produced great wealth & a  
 higher standard of living for large segments of society.  
 And also has.

without the aid / part. Cap. cannot solve these  
problem. The <sup>desirable</sup> extent of the aid - control - has not  
yet been determined. Training the academy determined.  
The countries which have desired <sup>needs</sup> Cap. entirely



have not only not worked in the world - but have created  
a new set of social evils which seriously affect the  
people. (loss of all liberty - tyranny - regimentation - terror)

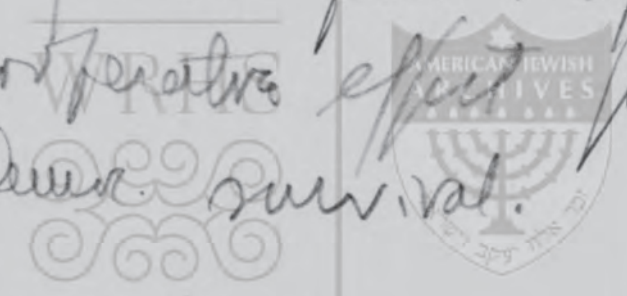
It will take generations of experimentation! <sup>There have been many types, variously devised.</sup> ~~Both~~  
forms of soc. control may not suit all peoples. Both  
Physical, historical & sp. factors vary with each people -  
& will determine various other ultimate forms, even  
arrangement. But free exper. is possible only  
under a system of free ~~political~~ government! Hence the total  
tyrannies of Berlin, Rome & America are not answers  
to the future but def. answers, the Past. - obstacles in  
the way of solving the problem, the free socialized  
comm. of to-morrow.

The "New Order" with its <sup>Arch-Cannibalism</sup> ~~is a~~ Imperial  
fraud! Little <sup>Arch-Cannibalism</sup> ~~thing~~ racial state - and their "heavenly"  
They haven't the slightest conception what the New  
Order is to be - to last 1000 yrs - except that Germans  
will sit on top of the world - & the rest of the world  
will work for them -

3/ The Road away from Disorder is the Road away from the Methodist  
by Dictatorship - <sup>coercively</sup> ~~voluntarily~~ coerced & ~~created~~  
belonging to social reconstruction. That way lies Slavery. The  
true Road ~~is~~ lies on the way back to Method. & Democracy -  
the sp. coerced & voluntarily accepted techniques of soc. Run -  
That way lies Freedom. <sup>There is still time to take that Road</sup> But a dy name device - which will



not hostile to experiment with new powers, econ. + social life -  
which then <sup>honest</sup> research, + courageous policy, hereby aside the selfish  
purs which always seek to capture + exalt it - will advance  
steadily to greater social justice + ~~fair equality~~ fairer distribution  
of social goods - Dem. must become, for more than in the past,  
an intelligent and ardent crusade for social justice, for a better  
happier life for our people, for a large measure, protection against  
the hazards, unemployment - sickness, old age. A democ. cannot  
long rest upon shams, blasted areas, under privileged children,  
hopeless youth, under paid workers, jobless men, unskilled  
old folks. - A Free people, seeking the good life for all,  
then free + effective fair - free + effective education -  
and voluntary co-operative effort for the common good -  
that is the <sup>Via Salutaris</sup> way of human survival.



4) This all means Religion! Blindness of the Vision which was  
nowhere lost amidst the voluminous so. achievements of the last century.  
The great human Goals - which rel. has set for mankind - Having  
lost sight of the goals - human purposes to-day has no clear  
direction.

Redeeming the Religion. ① God ② Justice. God  
and Justice. God without Justice is blasphemy! Justice  
without God is illusion! No free soc. can long endure  
without a vitifying faith in God - reality of sp. order -  
De Toqueville - "Despotism may govern without Faith -  
but liberty cannot"



7. For us Jews - Road away from Disaster - Road Towards Sol. (4)  
We have entered again upon an age of persecution & martyrdom.  
Whither shall we turn? To what ideal of life shall we seek  
refuge? Philanthropy? secularism?

Humanity has sickened of its Godless civilization. Because the spiritual interpretation of human destiny was allowed to languish, other interpretations have come to life and are now driving mankind mad. For when God is dethroned, His throne does not remain empty for long. Some false god, some Wotan, Moloch, Mammon or Mars soon occupies it. In place of piety, reverence, humility, compassion, self-sacrifice, other qualities—in-

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#### THE REDISCOVERY OF JUDAISM

solence, cruelty, aggression and combativeness—come to be extolled. Because men rejected the ideal of the sanctification of human life under God, they now have a world in which human life is held cheap, in which the stature of the individual has been reduced, his rights usurped by the state, his labor looked upon as a commodity and his life just a statistical item. Because men ignored the sovereignty of God's Moral Law, they now have a world in which men, parties and governments have set themselves up above all law. Where there is no longer the Law of God, there ensues the law of the Duce, the Fuehrer, or the Commissar, before which all men must tremble.

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THE WORLD CRISIS AND JEWISH SURVIVAL

ments followed the expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Portugal at the close of the fifteenth century and the appalling disasters which overtook Polish Jewry in the seventeenth century. The present-day expulsions of the Jews, the tragic experiences of myriads of refugees, the dismal plight of war-ravaged Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe, the stress under which Israel finds itself everywhere, coupled with the distressed mood of mankind generally, may give rise to a strong mystic movement which will express itself in religion and literature and in personal habits of thought and conduct.





1) What is Disaster? Prolonged Crisis - Agony of an Age -  
Cap. is breaking up - Feudalism - Transition more violent  
Our Ind. & Finance. Caps. has lost about along with -  
Dem. & Liberal unable to resolve - Resort to Dictator.  
Outrageously immoral rational - Right, Might - Master & Slave  
Racism - In Practice - Persecution & manipulation - Terrorism

2) Disrupted Int. Relationship - League - In place - "barbarism"  
The solution - "New Order" - contemplates - Division of World  
No permanent solution  
When war to end state - war to - <sup>(New Order)</sup> - resumed -  
Leave all war - founding issues - Arms for next war

3) In "New Order" of Fas. & Nazis - a fraudulent socialism.  
Used it in purpose - to fool the masses  
Forced upon them - logic  
Not outlawed private prop. - encouraged it - but signified  
So that both Hitler and Unruh - represent -  
But it is a soc. order which the middle class - think -  
resumed profit system - accumulation of wealth  
This inner contradiction - not resolved.  
Sharp distinction bet it and Soviet Socialism - not identical  
Contrasting economic phils. - inevitable conflict  
Naz. & F. may talk of "New Order" for Europe - But which?

4) That the world is moving steadily towards greater soc.  
150 yrs - our system of pop. education - masses -  
Capitalism itself - Devel. of Corporate industry - Finance



4  
Labor - struggles to which hardly cannot be made off. Under  
Cap has created econ. insecurity - unemployment - mal-distribution  
was -

without aid of Gov. Cap cannot solve this problem  
The desirable extent of Govt aid - not been determined  
cannot be determined academically

Conclusions - dogmatic - destroy priv. altogether - Milliken  
new set of social evils

It will take generations of Experimentation - One form  
many forms, Marxism - Democr. - Physical factors

But free experimentation is possible only - free Govt

Hence the total. Dict - Berlin, Rome, Moscow -  
Waves / Future

"New Order" - an Imperial Grand! Like Anti-Comm.  
They haven't slightest conception - 1000 yr - Germans  
on top of world - work for this

5). Road To Disaster - Methodology of Dict - materialist  
conceived - coercively prescribed techniques, i.e. Berlin  
slavery!  
Road away - Methodol. / Democr. / Sp. conceived - Vol. experiments  
Freedom - Still time to turn away from dead.

6). But it must be a Dynamic, experimental Democr.  
Not chained to old econ. forms - not hostile - not  
afraid, the People. -

One which - welcoming honest research, facts - Corrupts Hypocrites



brush aside the selfish forces which drag - capture & exploit -  
advance steadily towards greater Soc. Justice - fairer distribution  
Dem. must become ardent & untill. Crusade - Better way  
life - Amer. way of life -

Protection - a democ. cannot long rest - slaves  
under-paid children - hopeless youth - underpaid workers  
job-less men - overwhelmed aged.

A Free People - seeking earnestly the good life for all,  
thru voluntary & cooperation efforts, within a free and  
effective govt - "Via salutis"

7/. All this means Religion! The great Human Goals!  
Having lost sight of Goals - lost direction

All this means Rediscovery, Prophetic Religion (1) God  
(2) Justice, God and Justice! Justice and God  
without Justice - God is blasphemy -  
without God - Justice is slavery -

- 11.35 "

No Free Soc. can long remain

De Tocqueville - "Despotism may govern without Faith  
but liberty cannot"