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**MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.**  
Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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Only the brave shall be free, 1941.

At the time of the Maccabees, Jewish history was already old. The period of the Maccabees stands midway almost in our long history from Abraham to the present time. The men of that generation, the generation of the Maccabees, had already passed through the Age of the Patriarchs, the long period in Egypt, the period of the Judges, the Kings, the Prophets. The Jewish people had already been exiled from Palestine and had returned and rebuilt the country. The country had already been under foreign governments and empires -- under Babylonian rule, Persian, and now under the rule of the Greek Empire.

The Age of the Bible was over. The Age of the Talmud had not yet begun. There already existed a vast scattering of the people, a great diaspora. In the days of the Maccabees, large numbers of people lived in Asia Minor, Babylonia, Persia, Arabia. Everywhere these scattered Jewish communities reached, their small groups outside of Palestine constituted isles of knowledge in the midst of idolatry. They were oases, spiritual oases of religion, high morale and idealism in the midst of the pagan world. Palestine, itself, was the spiritual and national center of this far-flung diaspora. The bond of unity and cohesion was the Temple and towards the Temple the eyes of all the Jews all over the world turned. They recognized its spiritual authority. Palestine was the guide of the whole of the scattered group of Jews in Europe. A spiritual or religious collapse in Palestine, in Jerusalem, the capitol of the country, would have threatened the survival not only of the Jewish community of Palestine but of Jews everywhere because those other Jewish communities outside of Palestine were not as yet spiritually independent, nor had they yet strong religious discipline of the Jewish community in Palestine. These cities could not carry on

without constant guidance.

And now at the time of the Maccabees, about the middle of the Second Century b.c. a crisis arose which threatened the extermination of this center. There arose a ruler by the name of Antiochus the Illustrious who determined to destroy the religious uniqueness of this Jewish nation in Palestine and who wished to coordinate the Jewish people with the rest of his far-flung empire. The survival of the Jewish faith, this Jewish monotheism was a challenge to the paganism of his empire and to the greater unity of his empire which he sought to coordinate. The Maccabees and a few followers resisted this attempt and in so doing they fought not only in defense of Judaism in Palestine, but in defense of Judaism outside of Palestine -- and in a real sense, in the defense of humanity. For in Judaism, and in Judaism alone in those days there were those elements which became basic to the Western World in the following two thousand years.

The struggle of the Maccabees clearly was a hard one. They represented a minority within a small people. That people, itself was not united. Within that people there were many who were captivated by the new order of Asia..... Nevertheless, after a long and bitter struggle of three years, this handful of religious non-conformers, people who loved freedom and independence beat down over and over again the increasingly powerful army sent by Antiochus. And they won.

And we ask ourselves the question, "How did they come to win?" Why? How do the few win against the many, the weak against the strong? The answer is a simple one. The strong without faith have a primary strength. The weak who have faith have an ultimate strength. The sword in the hands of a soldier is not what wins the war. Nor is it the hand

which holds the sword. It is the mind which controls the hand which wields the sword which determines the outcome. It has been demonstrated over and over again that powerful weapons in the hands of strong armies frequently fail in their objectives because the mind and spirit back of the army is in critical state of collapse. Those who have the indomitable resolution reinforced by righteousness of their cause ultimately triumph. The forces of Antiochus came to enslave them. The Maccabees wanted to emancipate themselves and others, and the passion for freedom is a consuming one and a relentless passion -- the passion to enslave burns itself out with the first defeat.

The Maccabees and their followers had a great fighting tradition back of them. That is important to remember. Because Judaism has laid so much emphasis on peace, some people have jumped to the conclusion that Judaism lacks the courage of fighting for a great cause. This, of course, is not true. From the days of Abraham every great leader of Israel in its hour of crisis, when every other means failed, reached for the sword. Abraham himself when he found the city had been attacked unjustly, and the members of his house-hold had been taken into captivity rallied all his followers and set out to pursue his enemies and to slay them. Moses when he saw an Egyptian beating a slave smote him. Palestine was conquered step by step and paid for with blood and tears by the people. All through the period of the Judges and Kings the people of Israel were not averse to fighting for a righteous cause. The symbol of Judah is the symbol of the young lion.

The Jewish people was not a pacifist people - but a peace-loving people. They recognized that there something like obligatory war, that there were moments in history when they must think of God as a God of battle. They understood what the Psalmist understood when he said:

"Blessed is the Lord who traineth my hands for war, and my fingers for battle."

They knew from their sacred literature that whenever they found themselves under the dire necessity of fighting, their high priest would appear before them and say unto them. Thus we read in the Bible: "When thou goest forth to battle against thine enemies and seest horses and chariots and a people more than thou, thou shalt not be afraid of them...And it shall be, when ye ~~draw~~ draw nigh unto battle that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people, and shall say unto them: 'Hear of Israel, ye draw nigh this day unto battle against your enemies; let not your heart faint, fear not, nor neither be alarmed, /be ye affrighted at them, for the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies to save you." "What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethern's heart melt as his heart."

Our forefathers knew, all of them knew -- the Maccabees knew that war was evil, but not the greatest evil. The greatest evil was the loss of the essential liberties and the spiritual sovereignty of one's own precious way of life. The greatest evil was a people in slavery, a people in subjection, living in indignity. Life then would be worse than death. And these Maccabees had the courage to walk through the valley of the shadow of death in order to reach the mountains and the heights of the free life. They had a cause to warrant and to challenge and to reward their courage and sacrifice.

The whole story of Chanukah is just such a saga of heroism, whether the heroism of Mattathias of whom I read this morning; or of his son Judah who died in battle; or of Hannah who saw her sons slain one by one rather than counsel them to fall away from the faith of their fathers.

The whole Festival of Chanukah breathes the spirit of freedom, spiritual faith, and it is this faith which makes possible this type of

courage which the Maccabees had. They fought for the same thing America is fighting for today -- freedom of life, non-racial and non-religious persecution, free men and free nations. The language of Judah the Maccabee is the language of Churchill and Roosevelt today. America today is fighting not only for America, but just as the Maccabees, for the spiritual Americas all over the world, for the islands of free men now enslaved by forces of darkness and neo-paganism.

There is one difference and one uncertainty. The difference is that while the forces of Judah the Maccabee were weak, the forces of America and those millions fighting side by side with America, are strong. Their resources are great, as yet practically untapped. We have the material, unquestionably greater than the enemies. The one uncertainty which ought to make us search our hearts and minds is whether the American people possess the spiritual resources. Are the American people spiritually equal to the desperate struggle ahead of them? Have they the ultimate strength? Has America the courage today to take stock of itself, of its own shortcomings in order to be better prepared for the prepidations which await it. Is our failure at Pearl Harbor merely an accidental failure? The lack of preparedness, the lack of alertness, is it accidental? Have we not to get rid of much of our easy going ways, of our lazy confidence, of our self-satisfaction of any illusion that we have because of our great prosperity? Ought we not to begin to harden ourselves, to toughen ourselves, to discipline ourselves, to train ourselves down for the great struggle ahead?

We are facing a desperate foe, cunning, ruthless, strong. We

must begin to forego much, begin to work harder, to ask for less and to give more, to spend ourselves more -- our energies, our substance and our labor.

As a nation we should begin to rededicate ourselves to that faith which was ours in the days of Bunker Hill, and Valley Forge. We ought to rediscover ourselves. A coward loses himself in the long run. A brave man rediscovers himself in the long run.

A few weeks ago I reread a little volume of John Huss. In the preface he quoted this sentence which I should like to read to you: "As I prepare this little volume for printing, I cherish the hope that it may arouse in the minds of its readers a hatred of every form of spiritual and secular tyranny whether it be theocratic or Jacobi". The author wrote it in 1914 and his name was Benito Mussolini. Cowards lose their better selves as they go through life and meet new situations. Brave men rediscover themselves. They turn to the fountainsprings of original inspiration... We have become, because of years of prosperity, indifferent, almost cynical of the great enkindling and enthusiasm of the Revolution and of the Civil War. Slogans like "Give me liberty or give me death" almost put a smile on the lips of people. "Give me liberty or give me death! -- that was the spirit of the Maccabees, that was the spirit of the America Revolution, that was the spirit of the Civil War. That is today the spirit of Pearl Harbor. We can rediscover our essential genius and then we shall learn how to bear defeat without losing heart, how to dare and dare again for victory won. We need individual/<sup>great</sup>men and great women, men and women who will be capable of maximum sacrifice without grumbling at facing hardships, without complaint.

A great poet once expressed this spirit:

"Do you fear the force of the wind,  
The slash of the rain?  
Go face them and fight them...  
The palms of your hands will thicken,  
The skin of your cheek will tan,  
You'll grow ragged and weary and swarthy,  
But you'll walk like a man."

That is the test -- bravery without witnesses, bravery when you are alone -- that is the message of the Maccabees, of the Americans at war today. And if we take stock of our weaknesses, we can also take stock of our strength. There is a beautiful saying of our Rabbis: "Every man knows himself whether he will be immortal." That is clear if you know what the dynamic and controlling principles of your life are, what you will strive for, what you are working for -- then you know whether your life is linked up with things immortal, whether you are ben olam or not.....

"Art thou eternal, O God -- we shall not die." That is what Mattathias said to his sons. That is what his son said to his followers. That is what our ancestors said to their followers in every trial -- "God is eternal -- we shall not die." And that is the message of the little candles. Only the brave can be free, and when there is bravery -- spiritual bravery, faith, courage, size is not important, number is not important -- then victory.

① At time of Macc. J. hist. was already old -> 1500 yrs -

Mid-way 4000. Look back upon long past - from Ab.

to this day - Age of Patriarchs - Egypt - Judges - Prophets - Had been exiled - Returned - Rebuilt - Babyl - Persecution - Crucifixion -

- Age of Bible over - Age of Talmud - just begun.

- There was already a vast J. diaspora - 2c. Had

begun 400 yrs before - Jews lived everywhere - isles

= Pal. <sup>in sea & paganism</sup> was their sp. & cult. center - good unity

+ cohesion - Temple - Sent Rel. authority -

Culture race - united -

= a sp. + rel. collapse at the center - would

have threatened the survival of J. everywhere -

but successfully sp. indep. - rel. disaffiliat. -

- could carry on widely Pal.

= And now a crisis arose - which threatened exter.

of center - Antiochus - condemnat. -

= Forgot not only for Pal. - but for diaspora - and

for defense for humanity - ~~of the~~ . They knew as to be guardians of the future of Judaism

For princeps Jud. - were to become protectors of Morale  
of the West people for 2000 years

4/ They knew that <sup>(Peace)</sup> was an evil plot was the greatest evil - loss of  
 sp. sovereignty - essential liberties - precious path way of life -  
 = Peace in slavery - in subjection - in indignity. an un-  
 life can be worse > death!

= They had the courage to walk thru the Valley of Death  
 to reach the Mt. heights of the free life -  
 = They had a cause to vanquish & to challenge and to  
 reward their courage - Saga | Valor  
 ① Hannah ② ~~Eleanor~~ ③ ~~Suzanne~~ ④ <sup>Blain</sup> ~~Suzanne~~ with Hammer

5/ It is their faith & their courage - that made the world  
 now give to America -

= They fought for what Am. is fighting to-day - a  
 free way of life - No dictatorship! No Total!  
 No ref. & racial persecution - Chubbill & Thorn  
 as speaking the language of Wattalton - Am. too, now  
right in World Future

- ① Am. has the material resources for the struggle - unlike Jews  
 resources matter > fire
- ② Has it sp. resources? Has it sp. equal  
 to the struggle? Has it the "setback" strength!
- ③ Has it the courage to talk stark, stey - short-circuiting?)  
 Is our failure at Peace Harbor - an accident? lack of abilities
- ④ Shall have to shake ourselves free of an easy-going  
ways our lazy empire <sup>our self-satisfaction</sup> & harden ourselves by discipline,

- (4)
- (5) Foxy much - in love - a delicate job -
- (6) "Be stirring as the times, be free with fire" - sons of Priest
- (7) As a nation - redempts itself to its faith - course  
 to redeem itself - Soul clothed in dignity  
 - A coward loses his better self (Morrison) - Page from Abuse to General - was in liberty etc - Page from Abuse to General  
 "Been defeat without losing heart" - To dare and again dare, and never dare
- (8) As ind. men tremble - Maximum strokes  
substance without punishment (Jude)
- (9) Brave without witnesses - alone - ack
- (9) Talk stick also an strength -  
 7/18/12 11/2/12/12/12  
 - Contending with God  
 "As not then petent God, We shall not die!
- (10) Candles -

\* Business is used - Nat. energies - production  
Not enough! Hard work - long hours -  
Bunker Hill - Valley Forge - Pearl Harbor?

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