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Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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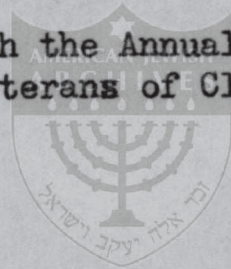
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Memories of the past - visions for the future, 1942.

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MEMORIES OF THE PAST -- VISIONS FOR THE FUTURE

Service held in connection with the Annual Memorial
Service of the Jewish War Veterans of Cleveland



By
Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, May 17, 1942

My dear Friends:

We have gathered here this morning to pay memorial tribute to those of your dear comrades who are no longer among us...The thought of the dear departed, especially if they are associated in our minds with some great acts of loyalty may well stir us to emulation, a desire to match all that was noblest in them. Your service, this morning in this grave hour of our national life has an added significance in that it makes us more keenly aware of the ritual and the discipline of patriotism. We shall have to make, during the days that come - and no one knows for how long -- draughts on our patriotic sentiments, honor, loyalty, on our spirit of sacrifice. No nation can survive, no nation is worthy of survival who is not willing to fight for it and if need be, to die for it. The things we cherish most in peacetime are the things we must be prepared to defend in times of war.

A service such as this stirs up memories of the past and our country has a great and stirring past. We have the heroic record of three wars which were fought manfully and sacrificially, for things which our people held dear. This nation was conceived in war, ^{the} Revolutionary War, to establish the rights of free men to govern themselves, to be independent of foreign dictatorship, to have the right to honor their own lives, and some seven or eight decades after that, our nation went through the fires of a Civil War and preserved this Union which was to emancipate the slaves, to extend the privileges of political freedom and equality...More recently in our own lifetime our country was engaged in a World War still venturing to extend the boundaries of freedom of all other peoples, to make secure for peoples all over the ~~new~~ world the rights of liberty and self-determination.

These three wars were no easy wars. They were prolonged in desperate struggle. They exacted a terrible price from our people, a price which they were willing to pay. And we are now engaged in a fourth heroic struggle which

is in a sense a continuation of the third, a logical continuation of the foregoing three wars and our people are again rising as one man in defense of the things which they and their forefathers held dear and sacred. We heard a great deal up to very recently of how decadent democracies were from the enemy. Being a free and self-governing people, and a democratic people, we are always slow to contention but slower still to quit once we are forced into a war. We are not given to belligerency. We do not idealize war. We do not seek other people's lands and territories. We are peace-loving people. We train our children to love peace and to persue it. But when the things we love are in danger and challenged throughout the world, then we are able to arise in might and full majesty of our great national spirit and fight. Our democracy is implaccable, indefeasible and our people does not lay down its arms until victory crowns the heavens.

I say that we have memories of a great past, some of which we can be proud -- but we also have greater visions of a greater future. We do not live in the past only. We are a young people. Here men dream dreams and young men see visions. There is enough of the hopefulness, and anticipation of youth, the beckoning of distant horizons in this youthful nation to look ahead to tomorrow to see even greater and more beautiful visions. Someone has called this twentieth century the American Century. In the sense that the life of the world is being tremendously influenced by everything which is American. In a larger sense, the last century was the American Century. The whole political and economic life of the world was inspired and challenged by that vision which America let loose upon the world in 1776 -- liberty, equality, universal education, the rights of men to a more decent and secure economic life -- all the struggles during the nineteenth century in Europe, in Central and South America for national independence, for the rights of the common man were directly instigated and inspired by American vision.

Recently the Vice-President of the United States spoke of a long drawn out people's revolution, the long drawn out people's revolution which began with the American Revolution back at the close of the eighteenth century. The world made progress in the last one hundred fifty years. The common man won great victories during that time, especially did the common man win victories in the United States. But unfortunately in recent years, there set in what many have called a counter-revolution which attempted to destroy all that America attempted to inspire in the last one hundred fifty years. We call it the Fascist-Nazi counter-revolution -- the attempt to undermine, destroy the inalienable rights of man, the charter of human liberties and re-establish state tyranny, slavery, slave labor, privileged classes, the subjugated nation. That is the meaning of the Fascist-Nazi attack on the Western world in the last ten years. It is counter-revolutionary. It is moving back the hands of the clock, going back to medievalism and feudalism from which men struggled to free themselves, from which the United States of America was the first to free itself. It is to rivet anew the shackles which the Founding Fathers of this republic were first to knock off the hands of men. We ~~are~~ are engaged today, even as we are assembled this morning -- all the united free nations of the world are engaged again in a struggle to defend the people's revolution, to defend the Declaration of Independence, the Bill of Rights, call it to defend the American vision. There are soldiers and sailors today in almost every part of the world -- on the seven seas, on every continent -- determined to fight and to give if need be their lives to defend their heritage and our gift to mankind. And we are doing it as a united nation, indivisible. We draw no line of distinction in our armed forces -- Jews, Christians, Catholics and Protestants, white and black.

Please recall the name of this country -- the United States of America.

Please recall the first phrase in the Constitution of the United States -- "We

the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union". That is the genius of America -- "in order to form a more perfect Union" - not merely of the original thirteen states, not of the forty-eight states, but a more perfect union in order to form/of all people, of all races, of all creeds which go to make up this superb symphony which we call America. If I were to state in one word what is the peculiar genius of the American people, I would say that it is the genius for unity, for unification for wiping out boundaries, distinctions, for discovering the basic human common denominator, the electric chord which Lincoln said unites all people into one basic unity.

This a land built not upon the concept of blood, but upon the concept of ideals -- loyalty to great human ideals. If you believe in them, if you live by them, if you are ready to die for them, you are one of this fraternity of the United States. If you scoff at them, deny them by word or act or thought, then regardless of your former affiliation, regardless of whether you are a native of this land, you are not one of the fraternity, you are an alien of these United States. In this war in which we are now engaged, just as in the foregoing wars of our people, this unity of our people is being tested, reaffirmed.

The men who died at Pearl Harbor, Corregidor, in the Far Pacific, were men of all religious groups, from various backgrounds, from all walks of life. They were all Americans and they sealed the test of American patriotism with their lives.

You Jewish War Veterans have a proud record to maintain. American Jews fought valiantly in every war in this Republic, from the Revolutionary War to in the this one. Your brothers are today/fighting forces of this country and are giving a good account of themselves. Jews by the tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands are in all the armed forces of our beloved land and some of them have already laid down their lives for their country. In this one Temple

under whose roof you are meeting today, more than one hundred young men have joined the armed forces for America and one has already laid down his life at Pearl Harbor for his country which he loved. What is true of this Temple is true of every synagogue in this city and of every synagogue in the United States. The American Jews and the American non-Jews are proud of their country, proud of the past, proud of the future and are prepared to make every sacrifice which they are called upon to make to see that this war which we are now engaged in and which we hope will be the last war -- prayerfully hope will put an end to all aggression, attacks on men, that this war shall be won.

I leave you, good friends, just with this thought -- that you will fight for what our allies are fighting for -- we are not alone in this great human struggle -- is to carry out that vision which the founding fathers of this Republic first gave to this world in order to form a more perfect union. That concept is brought home first as a union of thirteen states on the seaboard, then it was brought to a vast continent of forty-eight states and territories of the United States, and now it has brought ^{it} to embrace the whole world -- the American ideal is to form a more perfect union of all men and of all humans for mutual self-~~muti~~ need, to help each other to help men achieve the ages have struggled to achieve -- peace, justice, fraternity in the world, to help make this world a place fit for free men....

God bless this country. God bless this country. Gld bless all who labor in this hour, the soldier and the civilian, the men and the women to whlp bring about this more perfect union for all the children of God.

1) Gathered - recall - 1905 - stirred to Emulation - Makel -

Patriotism - virtue - disruption - Draughts

No nation can survive - Things we cherish in Peace

2) Am. has great Past - Heroic Record 3 Wars - Rise to defend
No easy wins - Gladly -

This 4th War - condemnation - Rising as an man
Decorous - "slow to contention - but slower to quit"
unpleasant and undefensible

3) Great Past - Greater Victories - Young - "I want to draw -"
Am. born in Victory - Record in 1876

4) "Am. Century" - 20th but 19th Model
All subsequent revolutions

Am. began "the long-drawn-out People's Revolution"
Liberty etc - Progress made - U.S. -

Counters. Revolution - Destroy all that Am. inspired -
No more Bill & Rights - Tax - State Tyranny - Slave Labor -
Privileged classes - Submerged people

5) Again called upon to defend People's Right - Deeds & Deeds
7 years - Alle & his Jews & Christians -

For we are one Nation inviolable - in 1914

Recall the name! Recall - "the people of the U.S. in order to
form a more perfect Union" - Genius - 13 states - 48
- not blood - ideals - elective cord"

6) For War, our Unity tested & reaffirmed - "Congress, etc"

7/ Fae - divide - weaken - All preacher, state

8/ Join as Soldiers - Bernard Fields -

9/ Carry on - Zero Hour - V. Sines -

In order to form a more perfect Union'

