



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

Reel
161

Box
58

Folder
737

How to face the unknown, 1946.

1) Human life is surrounded by much which is known and by much more which is unknown. ^{just sense} The more we come to know the greater ~~knows~~ ^{flows} the area of the unknown. The achievements of science ^{small fragments of knowledge} are snatched from the edges of what ~~has been~~ ^{is} hidden from us. The greatest scientists are the humblest of men in ~~their~~ ^{that way} for they know how vast are the contours of an ignorance ^{both} the unknown & the unknowable.

what Sir Isaac Newton confessed in his day (17-18c),
certainly the great sc. genius of our day will subscribe too. (DoB)

2) The known has been man's reward for labor and seeking and
daring, the Unknown has at all times been his challenge
and his goal. Often man paid dearly for the truth and
the power which he acquired. The Greek beyond the

the power which he acquired. Before man, was created, so ~~man~~ the first beyond the gods had given away all their best gifts to the animals - strength and swiftness ~~and courage and shrewd cunning~~ fur and feathers and wings and shells. No good at all was left for man, nothing to ~~cover~~ ^{warm} him, nothing to make him a match for the beasts. ~~But~~ Prometheus, the friend of man, whose name means forethought, went to heaven, to the sun, where he lit a torch and brought down fire. With fire man was more than a match for the beasts, with it he could light his way through woods & darkness to crops, ~~to~~ ^{and} comfort, ~~and~~ power.

to craft, ~~to~~ ^{but he desired} comfort, ~~to~~ power.
But ~~for his desire~~ to smother fire from heaven, ~~for~~
Zeus, the father, men & gods, had him taken to the

1). Human life - surrounded by much - Known - Unknown
In a sense the more we come to know - greater - area
Achievements of Science - bits + fragments of knowledge -
Greatest men of science - humbly - vast as the continents
What Sir Isaac Newton expressed (Truth)

2). The Known has been moving forward - labor - ~~seeking~~ desire
The Unknown - challenge - good
Often men paid dearly - truth - power required
Before Man was created, so runs - gods - had ~~power~~ away
Strength, wisdom, courage, cunning - Fire, Father, Wings
Nothing left - cover - match -
Promised them - Fire - Fire brought - went to heaven
to the sun - lit a torch - but does fire
with Fire, Man - match - light his way - worlds, death
But for his daring to snatch - ~~from~~ Zeus - Caucasus
Man kind, more esp. pathfinders, suffered fate of first
But, in spite of it, probe, in truth, unknown, incomprehensible

cameans, and riveted & chained to the lofty rocks, and then left to the fury, the elements, to suffering & endures for her.

Man kind, now esp. man kind's pathfinders, have often suffered something, the fate of the first light-burgies. But ^{in spite of} ~~always~~ ^{it} were always pushed into the unknown, the invisible, the inapproachable.

Men have always worshipped the Unknown unshipped and found it. Paul, at Athens, found the Athenians worshipping at an altar dedicated "agros to theo" to the Unknown. God. No god that is known can ever be unshipped truly worshipped. It is unfathomable god, former unknown, who is reverently worshipped. The nature of god is beyond man's ken, nor can his purposes be comprehended.

"Canst thou fathom out the deep things of God?"
"Canst thou attain unto the purposes, the almighty?" (Job)

And yet man has always sought to penetrate even that august mystery, by reason and speculation, by science and philosophy, by trough mystic trances and out-reachings for revelation.

Moses pleads with god - וְיִפְתָּח נָא עֵינֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְנִרְאֶה אֶת גְּבוּרָתְךָ וְאֶת עֲצָמוֹתֶיךָ and

וְיִפְתָּח נָא עֵינֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ - your ways - your essence!

No man can see god, & live! For if all that The limited

vessel cannot contain the limitless sea of divinity. You cannot unveil the Face of God and god holds out satisfaction and god gives out

But Moses is not content, that he will make all his goodness to pass before him - his handwork - but as regards his true essence - Moses will be able to catch a glimpse

not the Face, but of the back, ^{with} from the cleft, a
rock covered with the hand of God!...

But however covered and enveloped, from whatever clefts
and narrow fissures, there ^{until} penetrates the unknown
mind of man has always sought to know the unknown
and to penetrate the circumambient mysteries, his life.
עוד לא ידענו כל כך הרבה

3) To worship the Unknown, of whom we catch but flashes &
glimpses, but whose "goodness", whose created world
is unfolded in all its grandeur before us - is good!
It has always been a source of strength to man, who
knew so little and aspires to know so much.

We do not know the Being, God, but behind, there is
His handwork - עבודתו - Creation by means of
glorious strength, the Creator! The ordinance of the
Heavens & the earth bespeak the existence of the mighty, God.

The fact that man could never know God fully, nor
fully understand His ways & His purposes to this utmost
did not at all unmind Him too far from the concerns and
wishes of man, his early life God was the invisible Friend,
the ever-present help in time of trouble;

When in trouble and despair, the faithful devotee, this
great unknown but ever-present God, could raise
himself to our aid, his dependence by saying:

"Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
"And why art thou disquieted within me?
"Hear thou in God"

4) It is one thing to worship the Unknown - It is quite another thing ^{to} fear the Unknown!

The word "fear" is used frequently in the Bible. But 1.7, does not really mean ^{to be afraid} ~~fear~~ dread. It means rather to revere - to adore one so much as to wish to please him, to follow him, to obey his commandments.

God is not feared! He is revered! (x 25/11) Love & fear do not go together. We do not fear the one we love and who loves us!

5) But many people are afraid the Unknown! And here by the Unknown I do not mean God!

~~They~~ There are people who in their daily lives are afraid of many things, real or imaginary.

That which they do not know, do not comprehend, do not control fills them with a sense of insecurity & fear.

There are people who are afraid of losing their health, of losing their jobs, of losing their wealth.

There are those who are afraid of their children's future; of the future, their country, of the world. Atomic bombs.

There are those who are afraid of death.

~~It was~~ ~~European~~

We all long for safety & stability - and every thing which endangers them - fills us with fear. And there is so much that is inevitable, revolutionary, sudden & unpredictable happening in our world - many, if not all, are afflictions.

6) ~~And there~~ - hence there are various kinds of Fear.

There is, what you might call good a helpful fear, & there is the bad or harmful fear. (5)

- Fear is a valuable instinct. It makes us alert to dangers, & by so doing protects us. Fear teaches us caution, and makes us circumspect in the decision of objects or situations which are really dangerous to life and health.
- But there is also anxiety and then is phobia.
- Anxiety, has been defined, as fear without an object, due to fear of a threatening impulse within. It is an unrecognized fear of ourselves. It is not the object of fear, but fear itself. You create the thing which you fear.
- A phobia is a fear attached to object not in themselves dangerous.

These last two are "abnormal" fears - which far from helping & guarding man, undermine + destroy him

7/ It is against an acknowledging these anxieties that men turnmen should guard themselves. For such fears do really make us cowards and traitors to the best that is in us.

- In each man there lives a giant and a pigmy.
Courage, faith, confidence gives the giant in you his opportunity. Fear & doubt ~~betray~~ betray you to the pigmy!

8/ When we fear the unknown, what we really are victimized by is not the unknown future - for we have had no experience, the future & ∴ no reason to fear it.

~~to fear the unknown, is to fear the future~~

It is the dark, unknown ^{ancestral} past from which our unreasonably
primal fears ^{spring} ~~arise~~ - the jungle fears, the terrors, the
forests & ^{the} dangerous darkness and ^{the} frantic hearts
of prey, - all the fear-^{laden} ~~laden~~, bitter heritages, the human
race. But all this is the past - and the future.

Man ^{is} no longer as helpless in the face of danger as
was his ancestor in that ^{dark & distant} ~~dark & distant~~ past. He has
far more knowledge & ∴ far more power. He has clearer
visions of the truth and ∴ may learn to follow them.

9) There is really no answer to your anxieties except in
the strengthening of our inner spirit through faith,
and unselfishness and good works.

- It is only the citadel of inner security that can
defend you against the onslaught of unfavorable fortune.

- Who can win the future of your children? No one!
except ~~at~~ a good & peaceful world which you must
help to build for all children - and the strength, character
and the quality of life-ideals which you can help them
acquire!

Who can protect your own material well being in
this swiftly-changing econ. order in which you live?
Who can protect you against the "economic
unknown?" No one! Except a just econ. system
in which all men will find economic security.

= who can guarantee the freedom & the equality & peace (7)
America, against the horrifying breeds & vulgar dangers!
No one! America's security rests within the inner citadel
of the spirit, its citizens! America will not be
overthrown by a majority for. It can be destroyed only
from within. freedom & strife, & hitherto partisanship, & institutions
these alone threaten our country.

If we can master these forces of chaos - we
have nothing to fear for the future. Behold (Just)

How can we master these forces - and thus inner sp.
reform - on the part of each one of us. Not to accuse
others of freedom, encouraging strife, & class partisanship -
but - M/ea cul pa

19/ Who can give you a sense of significance in the
face of your own knowledge of your physical infirmities,
your declining strength, the fewness of your days upon
earth, the inevitable death? Who can give a
sense of purpose in the face of great odds, a confidence
in the presence of change, turmoil & the uncertainties of
tomorrow?

Only being busily engaged in some good work,
promoting some noble purpose, seeing some good cause.

You then feel that you are essential in some way
a small and isolated group of people in a small and isolated
but important sector of a far-flung battle - large
part of a grand strategy - for some ultimate victory.

At you are a channel the divine sea.
 You have confidence in the (Master shadow) - whose
 full plan is not revealed to you - but who needs
 you - as you need Him.

You will not be afraid of death - and, what's more, you
 will not be afraid of life.

You will say with the poet - Vivat Hugo



① "I do not know what I may appear to the world, but to myself I seem to have been only a boy playing on the seashore and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me"

You say, 'where goes Thine?' I cannot tell
and still go on. If but the way be straight
I cannot go amiss: before me lies
Dawn and the day: the night behind me: that
suffices me: I break the bands: I see,
and nothing more; believe and nothing less.
My future is not one of my concerns. —