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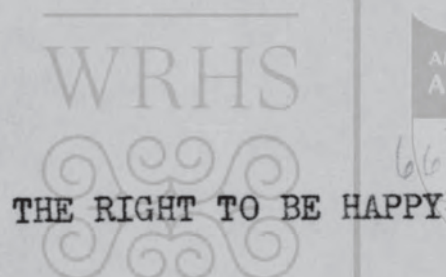
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The right to be happy, 1946.



By
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

At
The Temple

On
Sunday morning, February 24, 1946

Man has a right to be happy.

Some religions stress other worldly pleasures. Others distrust a man's enjoyment of his days on earth. They look upon it as if man were eating up both his spiritual interest and his capital in the world to come. They are prone to look upon this earth as a vale of tears wherein man is destined to pass through severe trials and tribulations. Some religions urge man to practise all forms of self-denial.

Not so Judaism! In the scheme of things as envisaged by our religion, there is definitely room for the possibility of happiness of human beings, and such happiness is definitely sanctioned and approved of by our religion. Judaism realizes that inevitably there is much sorrow in the world in store for human beings, many burdens and much bigotry, but also much joy, beauty, satisfaction and many hopes that do come true. Judaism advocates the good life because the good life leads to happiness....

Now all the numerous mitzvot, commandments concern conduct in life and are given by our religion to man so as to make his quest for happiness the easier. These mitzvot of the Torah are so many guides, guide-posts to help man reach the goal of his heart's desire. "He who observes the mandates of the Torah is a happy man." And the fulfillment of every mitzvah is accompanied by "brachah" - blessing. According to our Torah, man's purpose on earth is to do the will of God. But to do the will of God is to do those things which make for human happiness. It is not merely the ascetic Kohelleth in Ecclesiastes, from whose writings I read this morning -- it is not merely Kohelleth who sanctions, nay urges, full and rich enjoyment in life, but the entire classic tradition of the profound faith which is Judaism.

"Go thy way eat thy bread with joy
And drink thy wine with a merry heart.
For God hath already accepted thy works.
Let thy garments be always white.
And let thy head lack no oil.
Enjoy life with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy
vanity, which He had given thee under the sun.
For that is thy portion in life, and in thy labor wherein thou laborest
under the sun."

Man has a right to be happy. Unfortunately life today does not seem to contribute much to human happiness, nor does it seem to take much account of man's right to be happy. It is very interesting that the great Declaration of Independence of this Republic ushered in a new era in the political history of the world with the proclamation among its doctrines this very significant thesis: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." That is an amazing statement, this last one, written into a political document of a whole nation -- that man has unalienable rights to Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness in the world. That, of course, is basic Jewish thought. The founders of our Republic borrowed many of the great theses of Jewish thought for its political inspiration.

Unfortunately now in the world today, all these three doctrines -- the unalienable rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" are in many parts of the world being smashed. Life is held cheap, liberty is denied, and the right of man to pursue happiness is being thrust aside.

Of course every state in the world today, every political party proclaims from the house-tops that it is our duty to assure man maximum happiness, but they resort to those methods which trespass on the rights of the individual, which deprive him of his authority, his dignity and of his self-respect, which make him instead of happy, terribly unhappy.

There is in our world today a vast insecurity, a social insecurity which does not contribute to peace of mind. Men are apprehensive today for their own future, for the future of their people, for the future of their children. Men feel themselves caught up today in the grip of vast world forces which they cannot control. And man is struggling today desperately hard to safeguard for himself a measure of individual freedom which alone can make for a measure of happiness. As the poet said: "And we are here as on a darkling plain, swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,

where ignorant armies clash by night."

When we say that man has a right to happiness, we ought to understand what we mean by rights, and what we mean by happiness. We have no right to acquire for ourselves what we think is happiness at the expense of other people. No one has a right to exploit others and to climb on the shoulders of others unless the other shoulders are willing. Unfortunately not alone in society as a whole, but frequently in smaller social units, frequently in the home, one member or another seeks to augment himself, to improve himself, to seek his own happiness and disregard the rights of the other members of his home. No one has the right to trample on the rights of another man whether he be a parent, child, brother or sister in order to achieve happiness for himself or herself.

We do have the right to demand that no artificial barrier be unjustly put in our pursuit of happiness whether by state, community, or the home. We have the right to be free to develop ourselves, to realize ourselves in all ways which are socially unimpeachable, socially incompatible.

We have the right, the God-given right to live in accordance with our own beliefs and our own convictions, and to pursue our happiness in our own way, free from unwarranted interference from society, from the community, from the group to which we happen to belong, from the smaller unit of the family.

The right to be happy implies also an understanding of what we mean by happiness. We cannot mean just pleasure, unlimited self-indulgence, satisfaction of every whim. No man has that right because that does not contribute to any happiness, nor is it socially desirable.

If you were to summarize or think what makes a man happy, it could be summarized in three simple words. I give them to you, not because they represent the final thought on the subject.. but only because they do ~~XXXXX~~ indicate the three things that are needed for human happiness: Bread, Work, Love.

Men need bread as a base for his whole super-structure of satisfying human

existence, because man is not entirely independent in his quest for happiness, from pressure of the external. Poverty does not nourish happiness. Some people are happy in spite of want. But they are really the spiritual elite who find overwhelming compensations and satisfactions elsewhere, who can go through life in spite of poverty and want with a glow, with an inner satisfaction because they have linked up their lives so transcendently. Everything that happens to them really doesn't concern them. They are very few.. We speak not of the spiritually few, the aristocrats of the spirit. We speak of the average human beings -- ourselves.

For most men, poverty dulls and embitters, makes them envious, hateful. Those things do not contribute to human happiness. Our society must make possible a fair human subsistence for every human being. That is every man's right. Society must make it possible for there is actually enough to go around for everyone. All the revolutions of our age and all the terrible unhappiness that has been unleashed on the world, in the last analysis, is due to the fact that the vast masses of people lack "bread" the basic elementary necessity of life, and an age finally came when people resolved not to endure it any longer. "Bread," then is the first requisit to happiness.

Man does not ~~xx~~ live by bread alone. What more does he require? Because if that were the only requisite of happiness, the rich, the opulent, they would be the happiest people in the world. But they are not. Evidently much else is needed. And "Work" is needed. Man needs work, an interest in work, congenial work, work that will express him. Men who eat the bread that their fathers, grandfathers prepared for them are never happy because no man who eats the bread of idleness is ever happy. No life is complete unless it fully and harmoniously expresses itself through action, through all our faculties. The work may be hard and exacting, but just so long that man feels that he wants to do what he is doing and is doing it well, that man is, I believe, happy. "When thou eatest the labor of thy hand, thou art happy." "It is good for you." That applies equally to the manual laborer, or to the professional

man. It makes no difference what calling it is provided it is a calling, a vocation, a challenge, provided it yields some basic satisfaction.

Some men aspire both to a job and a calling. The job gives them their livelihood, and the calling, sometimes called a hobby, gives them fulfillment and realization. They are wise people because they have more than one world. But some people, some businessmen, some professional men, fail to grasp the need for the coordination of life as well as for its specialization. Some people specialize without coordinating. They specialize for success. It is perfectly legitimate, but they pay too high a price for it.

I know many men who give up much of the available intellectual enjoyments of life, cultural interests, reading, even play, and the inspiration which they might give to a fascinating home life for a material success which is insatiable, which is voracious. They sacrifice everything for it. That is not smart. Aristotle said: "Happiness lies in the activity of the mind." There is certainly much truth in that. Happiness does lie in the activity of the mind -- in the quest for knowledge, in thinking, in indulging in the free play of intelligence, in the discovery of new continents of knowledge and truth and beauty.

And for those who specialize, for many of them before they know it, life slips away, and they are old, tired men. All the excitement of the chase is gone and has yielded them no contentment. The seasons swept by them and their harvest is blighted.

We need bread for happiness. We need work for happiness, for work which is replenishing, developing, not restricting.

Ideals also help, a touch of dreaming helps. If you have an ideal in your life - it doesn't have to be one out of the reach of the ordinary human being, it brings an exaltation into our routine days. It links up with the great world about us and with things which are enduring and universal. The link becomes one with the chain.

Bread - Work, you need for happiness. And love. No one has ever been happy who has not known great life. No one has ever been happy who is selfish. Selfishness

starves one. Love is the royal road to happiness -- love of one's mate, love of one's child, love of one's friends, love of one's God, love of humanity -- there are various degrees of love, but they are all stepping stones to happiness provided that the love itself is not tainted with excessive selfishness. Because then love turns into something very different -- into envy, jealousy, intolerance and destroys happiness.

We all want happiness in the world....Our days are few. We all want to snatch a bit of happiness somewhere. But we look for it in the wrong places.

You know the story of the man who sought all his life the philosopher's stone. As a young man he left home in search of it. He traveled over mountains, in valleys seeking the philosopher's stone never finding it, sampling everything, but never discovering the truth he was seeking. Finally in his old age, weary, broken, disillusioned, he found his way back to his home only to discover that the philosopher's stone which he was seeking all his life was hanging ^{from} ~~on~~ a chain ^{on} ~~from~~ his neck, that it was with him all the time.

The place to look for happiness is very near at home. Some people think that happiness is found only in distant places, in something extraordinary, something far removed. It isn't so at all. Happiness is found very near at home -- in Bread, in Work, in Love. Happiness really cannot be sought. It is not a thing in itself. It goes with something. It is a result of harmony. If you do certain things in a certain way, it will yield that satisfaction, that enduring soul-satisfying satisfaction which you call happiness.

The Greeks had a very profound saying. I give it to you: "The good man is the free man. The free man is the happy man. Goodness, freedom, happiness -- that is how things are inter-related in the world. Without goodness, without freedom, there is no happiness. Goodness and freedom means Bread, Work, Love. We have a right to happiness. And the way of achieving it are the same as of old.

1/ Man has a right to be happy!

Some rel. ^{stand} other worldly - distrust - ^{as of} eating up ^{both his sp. interests} ~~the~~ capital.

- Vale of Tears - deny - asceticism - ^{J. Schum, things which make room for the Holy Spirit} ^{H. sometimes} ^{they are} ^{some} ^{of} ^{the} ^{best} ^{of} ^{the} ^{world}

- Not so Judaism - ^{The Good life - leads to H.} ^{guides} ^{עושה} ^{הטוב} ^{חיים} ^{לפי} ^{דרכי} ^{ה'}

2/ According to our tradition man's purpose on earth is to do the will of God. ^{But to do the will of God} is to do those things which make for human happiness.

It is not merely the sceptic - ^{legitimacy of H.} ^{עושה} ^{הטוב} ^{חיים} ^{לפי} ^{דרכי} ^{ה'} ~~even more the~~ classic tradition of profound faith & Judaism.

"Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy
And drink thy wine with a merry heart.
For God hath already accepted thy works.
Let thy garments be always white.
And let thy head lack no oil.
Enjoy life with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the
life of thy vanity, which He had given thee under the sun;..
For that is thy portion in life, and as thy labor wherein
thou shalt labor under the sun."

3/ Man has a right to be happy!

Life, to-day, does not seem to contribute much to human H.
or to take much account of man's right to H.

"Declaration of Independence - life, liberty & the pursuit of H."
Holding life cheap - having denied liberty - thrust aside -

4/ Every system, every state, every party, ^{clamors for honesty} ~~parades~~ - that
- its sole objective - but - it resorts to methods which
- torments - deprives - beat him into insubordination
- make him miserable
- ~~It would be well if the world was let alone~~ ~~not planned for~~

5/ Fast insecurity in life today. A social instability
which does not contribute to Peace & Amity -

Apprehensions for our own future - children - ^{Despair} ~~Despair~~ ^{Realism} ~~Realism ^{Confusion} ~~Confusion~~
"And we are here as on a desolating plain, swept with confusion
alarms of struggle and flight, where ignorant armies clash by night"~~

6/ When we speak of Right to be Hoppy - We must
understand what we mean by Right - Hoppers

(a) We have no right to acquire what we regard as It
at other people's expense.

No one has the right to exploit other people - to cheer
on other people's shoulders - values they or with
shoulders - to one's own desired perch -
Not only in society - is this frequent - with in homes
one member or another seeks to improve - ~~at~~ in disregard -

(b) We have the "right" to demand that no barriers
be unjustly put in our pursuit of happiness -
by ~~our~~ ^{our} environment, home or society
To be free to develop ourselves ^{to realize ourselves} in all ways
socially ~~unimpaired~~ compatible.
To live in accordance with our beliefs & convictions
~~free from~~ ^{free from} unwarranted interference & coercion.

7/ And by H. we cannot mean ~~to understand~~ pleasures - (3)
unlimited self indulgence - unbridled satisfaction / every
whim or appetite.

This does not contribute to H. - no is it socially despicable

8/ Three things are needed for Human H. (1) Bread (2) Work.

(3) Love.

They need bread as a base : man not indep. Externals
(1) Poverty does not nourish H. - Same as happy in life
(want a penny - either the % elite - who have other
overwhelming compensations - satisfactions. Very few!

(2) For most poverty dulls - deadens - or embitters, evokes
hatred + resentment - no H. then!

(3) Soc. must make possible a fair econ. situation
for all. there is enough to go around:

(4) The revolution ^{unhappy} of our age - men lacked Bread -
+ finally resolved not to endure it any longer.

~~Man is not altogether independent of the Externals~~
9/ But man does not live by Bread alone -
Much more is required for human H.

Rich - unhappy!

10/ Man needs work - interesting work - congenial work
work that will express him.

Men who eat the Bread of idleness - no human H.
no life is complete unless it is fully human

expresses through action - all our faculties.

- The work may be hard - exacting - but just so long as he is doing what he wants to do - right to do - doing it well he is happy -

— 7/2/61 p. 216: Love is 7100 to 1171 —

- Applies equally to manual labor, as to business, or to professions - any calling - just so it is a calling! a vocation - a challenge - & a satisfaction.

11). Some men ^{aspire} ~~have~~ both a job & a calling - when the job gives them their livelihood - & the calling - the hobby - gives them the fulfillment & realization.

They are wise! They have more on world!

Some less men & professionals fail to grasp the need for condemnation of life - as well as specialization.

They specialize for success - but pay too high a price for it -

Gives up ^{so much} ~~all~~ intel. enjoyment, cultural interests, reading, even play - & the inspiration which they ^{might} ~~lose~~ ^{find} in a perpetuating home-life - for a material success - which is unsatisfiable. He is too - He lives in the activity, the struggle! To think - to manipulate in free play of intellect - to express himself.

They stave their lives to feed their ambitions!

And life slips away - and before they know they are old, tired men - and all the excitement then chase

Yielded them no contentment. The seasons reaped by them[©]
And their harvest is blighted; ~~and not at all~~. And their
~~world is peopled with~~

12). We need bread for H. — and work — ^{refreshing} ~~fulfilling~~ + ^{refreshing} ~~fulfilling~~
or ^{soft} ~~soft~~ ^{developing} work —

— Ideal help. A touch of dreams helps. It brings an
exaltation into our routine days — ^{a melody that sings}
It links up with the great world about us — ^{a breath of spring}
things becoming + universal. The link becomes
one with the chain

13/ Bread — Work — Love.

No one has ever been happy who was selfish —

Selfishness constrains + confines us —

Love is the royal road to H. —

Love, our mate — of our children — of our home —

of friends, of country, of humanity — of God —

There are degrees of love — but all stepping stones to

H — unless they themselves are tainted with
excessive selfishness —

Then love turns into envy, jealousy, intolerance —
and destroys H. —

14/ We all want it. We look for it in the wrong places

Philosophers Stone ***

15/ Cannd struggle after it — not a thing in itself!

Bread - Work - Love —

Few are "fully happy" - but - look for it in right places

^{even tho}
for we came like water & like wind we go!

'The good man is a free man. The free man is a
happy man'

