



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

Reel
162

Box
58

Folder
813

The Fountain of Youth, 1950.

736
THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

Sunday, January 22, 1950

All through the Middle Ages there persisted a popular legend concerning a Fountain of Youth - a Fountain of Youth, which was situated somewhere in the Indies, which possessed the power of rejuvenation. You may recall that Ponce de Leon, who had heard reports from the Indians of such a medicinal, curative spring somewhere in the New World, set out to find these waters of the Fountain of Youth which would restore his youth and his vigor, and as a result, discovered Florida in 1513 - Florida, to which people are still going to find the Fountain of Youth. Men are still seeking that fountain for, as Talleyrand once remarked, "Everyone wants to live long; nobody wants to be old." ^{my youth} ^{- quite a paradox} Everyone would like ^{to remain young} ~~to hold forever~~, to enshrine his youth or ~~imprison his youth forever~~ like ^{that} ~~those~~ beautiful ^{man} and maid enshrined forever in their youth and loveliness ^{in Keats} ~~on Keith's~~ Grecian Urn. ^{all}

stop *Flis on my mind*

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

But today it is to the marvelous springs of scientific discovery that people are turning for the boon of rejuvenation. From time to time a Voronoff, a Steinach, through their studies of gland secretions and their experiments in the grafting of animal glands upon human beings, seem to hold out the promise of some method of rejuvenation. A new science - the science of geriatrics - is developing today as a branch of medical science concerned with the aging process of the human body, how to prolong physiological health, efficiency of the human organism; how to keep young while growing old; how to enjoy a longer period in which we can be physically and mentally and socially effective.

More men and women, far more people, are becoming interested in this science today because more and more people are living long enough to grow old. A hundred years ago life expectancy was around 30 years. In 1940 life expectancy had risen to 62 years. In 1940 10% of the population of the United States were over 60 years of age, and it is expected that by 1980 the percentage will rise to 20 - 20% of our population

MISSING PAGE (S)



sical excesses of all kinds, licentiousness, the spending of the vigor and the vital energies of his life quickly, age pounces on him."

You may recall that very beautiful second act in "As You Like It" where the melancholy Jacques portrays the seven ages of man and finally describes the last of the seven ages in a very dolorous and pessimistic vein. The last scene of all is second childishness and mere oblivion, "sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste and sans everything". And just when he finishes that soliloquy, Adam appears on the scene - the old man who had been previously described in that second act, where he described himself in the following words:

Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty.
For in my youth I never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood,
Nor did not with unbashful forehead woo
The means of weakness and debility.
Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
Frosty, but kindly.

Shakespeare knew of two types of old age - the one that was spent because men had wooed the means of weakness and debility, and the other, where men had taken care of themselves, and therefore, reach an old age which is a lusty winter, frosty but kindly.

One important fact that should be borne in mind always when we discuss age and youth is that our intellectual and ~~our~~ psychological age need not ~~correspond~~ ^{run} parallel to our physiological age. ~~A man can retain his intellectual faculties, his spiritual faculties, his artistic faculties much longer than his physical faculties.~~ ^{Man + woman the vigor of their} ~~There are certain things which a man can do longer than others.~~ ^{the vigor of their} ~~There are certain things which we can no longer do or do as well after reaching a certain age - things, for example, which call for physical speed or sustained exertion or quick resilience or easy adaptability, or easy learning.~~ ^{not do} We do those things much better when we are younger. On the other hand, there are certain things which we can do better, far better, when we are older - things which call for judgment and reasoning ability, ~~for experience~~, for discrimination, for taste, for sagacity. Benjamin

Franklin once said, "Beware of the young doctor and the old barber." There's a good deal of wisdom in that for in our barber we want the steady hand of youth, but in our doctor we want the wisdom and the mature skill which come with seasoned years.

Interesting, the attitude of our Bible to the question of age. It's so different, so radically different from the attitude of nearly all the peoples of antiquity. In the Book of Job we find, "Wisdom is with aged men and understanding in length of days." Scriptures reveres old age, not merely years - plenitude of years which make people old. There's no particular virtue or merit or achievement in living to a ripe old age if it's just that and nothing more because it isn't how long we live, but how we live. But old age which brings with it a harvest of garnered wisdom, of fruitful years - as I read this morning, "The glory of young people is their strength, and the beauty of old men is their hoary head." "The hoary head is a crown of glory," says the Bible. Not just the hoary head, not just the white hair. White hair isn't any more beautiful than black hair or brown hair, but the kind of hoary head "which one acquires in a certain way of living, a beautiful way of living" when richness of years is matched is matched by richness of achievement, accumulated wisdom - that kind of hoary head is a crown of glory.

Therefore, the Bible says in the Book of Leviticus, "Before the hoary head a man should stand up, revere the face of the old man." Now, the best of those who are studying the problem of old age today among ^{established} scientists have ~~declared~~ that it is possible to think creatively and make ~~invaluable~~ contributions at practically every chronological age beyond early youth. A scientist not so long ago made a study of the best work, the master work, of a group of eminent scientists and men of affairs, and he found that 22 out of a group of 91 eminent scientists and 19 out of a group of 80 men of affairs who had won fame, produced their greatest achievements after the age of 60, and in the case of 6 of the scientists, their chief contributions to mankind were made after the age of 80. ~~Creative imagination, creative intellectual~~

work, creative spiritual enterprise hasn't at all the same age limit that feats of physical prowess demand. In certain activities of life the older man has by far the advantage over the younger man; the older doctor, the older lawyer, the older statesman, the older craftsman, in many ways the older businessman who has accumulated the experience and the know-how of his profession. ~~They have a definite advantage in the very struggle for existence, not to speak of in other fields, over the younger man.~~

~~One of the rabbis said, "If old men tell you to destroy and young men tell you to build, you destroy, for the destruction which old men recommend is probably far more socially valuable than the building which immature and inexperienced youth recommends."~~ The great handicap of ~~old age~~ ^{older people} consists in that ~~it~~ ^{they} must make a much greater effort ~~- that is what many people overlook. It must make a much greater effort than youth, of course,~~ ^{young people} to overcome certain attitudes within ~~one's self.~~ ^{themselves} They are almost fatal to remaining spiritually, mentally, intellectually young and vigorous. They must overcome tiredness and set habits and set prejudices and conservatism and complacency and a tendency to suspicion and ~~increased~~ ^{to} self-centeredness ^{all} - mental adhesions ^{after} 7 cobwebs ^{at} 50. In youth there is ~~in the human body~~ ^{a natural} an ebullience, an agitation, an eager out-reaching, a lusty appetite for life's adventures. The eyes of youth are ~~searching and penetrating~~ and eager and questing. Age is far less eager and anticipatory and agitated. Age does not crave for the wings of Icarus, for the winged boots of Mercury - to fly, to soar, to reach the sun. Age is satisfied with the velvet slipper, the comfortable arm chair, the warm fire, and dozing.

"I find it a great and fatal difference," wrote Emerson in his Journal, ~~"I find it a great and fatal difference whether I court the muse or the muse courts me."~~ That is the ~~very~~ disparity between age and youth. In later life it is we who have to court the muse if we wish to remain young in mind and spirit, and by so doing, remain younger also in body, for our mental attitudes, ^{and active} our interests undoubtedly influence our bodies. Vigorancy of spirit, vitality of mind, alert and eager interests,

the rhythm and melody of new ideals ^{pouring} swinging through our souls - ~~why~~, these are ^{self} ~~bound~~ ^{retard} to make our physical ~~organism~~ more alive ~~and more active, more flexible,~~ more youthful, and ~~retard~~ the inexorable advance of senescence.

✓ Some years ago I read a book which some of you may have read, "Man, the Unknown", written by Dr. Alexis Carrel, and I noted in that book the following passage:

The aging man should neither stop working nor retire. Inaction further impoverishes the contact of time. Leisure is even more dangerous for the old man than for the young. To those whose forces are declining, appropriate work should be given. But not rest. Neither should physiological processes be stimulated at this moment. It is preferable to hide the slowness under a number of psychological events. If our days are filled with mental and spiritual adventures, they glide much less rapidly. They may even recover the plenitude of those of youth.

✓ ~~Old age, my dear friends, is sad in many instances.~~ Old age is sad when it is dependent. ~~Men and women should, as far as possible, employ their youthful years and their labors through industry and thrift to insure themselves against dependence in old age. It is not good to be a pensioner of children or of the state.~~ But dependence is not exclusively an economic dependence. One can be dependent in old age upon others because one has ~~no inner reserves~~, no inner resources of his own. One has to feed on the lives of others because one cannot draw upon intellectual and spiritual savings that one has accumulated during ^{one's younger} ~~the~~ years. Old age is sad when it is bitter, when it is frozen up within the hard dregs left behind by a selfish and ruthless youth and manhood, when it is haunted by unwelcome ghosts, when it is friendless because one had failed to win and hold comrades in love and loyalty. Old age is sad when it is not sustained by tender memories and ennobled by an indemnifying serenity.

✓ But old age may also be sad, ~~dear friends, when it is vapid, when it is stale and empty, when it is rusting away, even when it is rusting away pleasantly and hardly~~ imperceptible. ~~The thing to remember always is that one can be as active in learning, in friendship, in the performance of duty, in civic tasks, in citizenship, in faith,~~

in social service, in old age as in youth - just as active. And because it is better equipped by knowledge and experience, one can be more intelligently, and therefore, more helpfully active, especially one should be active in learning. "Learning keeps the soul young," wrote Leonardo de Vinci, who lived to a ripe old age and created masterpieces in his old age. "Learning keeps the soul young and decreases the bitterness of old age." We must never stop going to school, literally and figuratively, learning something new all the time, whether it is in arts or in crafts, whether it is gardening or carpentry or collecting, whether it is poetry, painting, music or drama or a new language begun when one is 70. These are the vitamins of youth, far more youth-restorative than cosmetics upon which, I understand, the women of our country spend annually more than half a billion dollars. Learning smoothes out the wrinkles of the mind and gives one a new and exciting permanent wave for the soul.

Now, ^{these} doctors tell us that one should have a physical check-up ^{periodically} regularly. ^{I know} my doctor ^{has} told me that ^{time and again}, especially as we get older. We don't always listen to our doctors, but they keep on giving us this good advice - a physical health check-up to detect what is deficient, what perhaps is ^{super-abundant} super-abundant, too, and to ^{suggest} correct or diet, as it were - to keep us in good physical trim. Now, the point that I am making, not being a doctor - only a rabbi - is that we need the same check-up periodically of our mental and spiritual health if we want to keep trim. Perhaps we need a new prescription as to a new mental and spiritual diet. Perhaps we are starved for intellectual nutriment, and ^{are in consequence becoming} thus, we become old before our time. ~~I assure you, if you do that, you will feel much younger and look much younger.~~

There's a story told in the Talmud of a famous rabbi, Judah ben Illaig, of the second century, one of the great Tannaim of the Mishnah, whom a pagan once saw in the market place and looking upon his radiant countenance, shining face - ~~this pagan~~ exclaimed, "This man must be one of three things. He's either ~~a drunkard, he's either~~ intoxicated, or he has just gotten a big job with the government and is extremely

happy and radiant about it - ~~perhaps a tax collector, which was a very profitable~~
~~job in those days~~ - or he has just discovered ^{an} ~~a treasure,~~ a hidden treasure." Rabbi
Judah ben Illai overheard this exclamation of the pagan, and he turned to him and
said, "My friend, I am none of these three things. I don't drink, except when I
have to for Kiddush, and when I take four cups of wine on Seder night, on Pesach,
I have a headache from Pesach to Shevuot for seven weeks. I've ~~had~~ nothing to do
with government, and I assure you that I'm a very poor man. I've found no treasures."
"But what makes your face so radiant, ~~so youthful,~~ so shining." "Why," Judah ben
Illai said, "that's simple. I'm studying all the time. I study the Torah, and as
you know, ^{learning} the intellectual quest of a man makes ^{a man's} his face to shine."

When I see a radiant face, especially on an elderly person, a gleam in the eye,
~~an awareness,~~ an alertness, I know that that mind behind that face is very active,
not rusting - it's learning, ^{is} interested. My advice is to keep learning, keep your-
self useful and needed. Get something in terms of service, in terms of knowledge,
in terms of a skill which the people about you require and want. You'll be needed;
you'll always be useful, and no one feels really old until he comes to feel himself
no longer needed, no longer wanted.

I salute those who, though older and more tired, remain indomitable. I salute
those who do not succumb to the insidious becalming of oncoming years, ~~those~~ who do
not let the glory depart, ~~those~~ whose life retains to the end, ^{its rhythm} ~~to the end,~~ its motion,
and its scope. The men and women who know no end of voyaging, who though they know
that they are traveling westward to the setting sun, are yet unwearied of the beckon-
ing road. "In the morning they sowed their seed and in the evening, they do not with-
hold their hand," as Koheleth said. "And for them the light is sweet and a pleasant
thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun, and if a man have many years, let him re-
joice in them all."

The Fountain of Youth - where is it? Why, dear friends, it is in the inexhaustible wellsprings of the human spirit, the living and the unfailing waters of human aspiration.

You may recall that beautiful poem of Tennyson, "Ulysses". Ulysses had been a wanderer for many years. He was trying to find his home again. The journey had been long and wearying. Now Ulysses is old and so are his companions, but he says to them

..... you ~~are~~ ^{and} I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil;
Death closes all; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks:
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order, smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down:
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;--
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

~~The Fountain of Youth is not to yield to old age.~~

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

Sermon delivered by Dr. Abba Hillel Silver

Sunday, January 22, 1950

All through the Middle Ages there persisted a popular legend regarding a Fountain of Youth which was situated somewhere in the Indies, and which possessed the power of rejuvenation. You may recall that Ponce de Leon, who had heard reports from the Indians of such a miracle spring somewhere in the New World, set out to find it in the hope of having his youth and health restored. As a result, he discovered Florida in 1513 - Florida, to which people are still going as if to a Fountain of Youth. People are still looking for such a fountain for, as Talleyrand remarked, "Everyone wants to live long; nobody wants to be old." Everyone would like to remain young and forever to retain his youth even like that beautiful youth and maiden whom Keats saw enshrined in all their springtime loveliness on that Grecian Urn.

Today it is to the marvelous springs of scientific discovery that people are hopefully turning for the boon of rejuvenation. From time to time a Voronoff, a Steinach, through studies of gland secretions and experiments in the grafting of animal glands upon human beings, seem to hold out the promise of some method of rejuvenation. A new science - the science of geriatrics - is developing today as a branch of medical science which is concerned with the aging process of the human body, with the prolongation of physiological health; in other words, with how to keep young while growing old.

More men and women are becoming interested in this science today because more and more people are living long enough to grow old. A hundred years ago life expectancy was around 30 years. In 1940 life expectancy had risen to 62 years. In 1940 10% of the population of the United States were over 60 years of age. It is expected that by 1980 the percentage will rise to 20%.

This poses a very grave problem of adjustment for the country as a whole. An aging population requires new social planning in terms of industry - how to insure jobs for older people - in terms of health, education, recreation and social security. I do not believe that the American people has fully awakened to the implications of this changing age level of our population.

At this moment, however, we are thinking only of the individual and his personal problems and attitudes as he passes the summit of his years and begins his descent into the long valley and the gathering dusk.

Undoubtedly, there does set in a physiological decline with advancing years. It does not come at the same time to all men, nor does it come to any one man simultaneously to the whole of him. Parts of us get older than others. As one physician put it, "A 60-year-old man may have a 40-year-old heart, a 50-year-old kidney, an 80-year-old liver, and he may be trying to live a 30-year-old life."

Just when we begin to age depends, of course, on many factors, principally, I suppose, on our original physical endowment - on the inherent qualities of the genes. It also depends on the kind of care or abuse we give to our system. Excess of all kinds, worries, over-work, pressure, unhappiness - these have much to do with the speed with which we start getting old. One rabbi declared, "Because of four things old age springs early upon a man: because of fear, worry, insecurity; because of grief caused by children; because of a bad wife - this was written by a man - it can be said also equally of a bad husband - and because of wars, the evils, the destruction, the upheavals, the impoverishment and the terrors which come with war. Another rabbi said, "Everyone who is steeped in licentiousness, which consume the marrow and the ~~springing~~ vigor of his life, will have age spring upon him early."

You may recall that very beautiful second act in "As You Like It" where the melancholy Jacques portrays the seven ages of man and describes the last of the seven ages so very dolorously: "The last scene of all is second childishness and mere

oblivion, sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste and sans everything." When he finishes his sad soliloquy, Adam appears on the scene - as if in rebuttal - Adam, the very old man who had previously described himself in the following words:

Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty.
For in my youth I never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood,
Nor did not with unbashful forehead woo
The means of weakness and debility.
Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
Frosty, but kindly.

Shakespear knew of two types of old age - the one which was decrepit because men had wooed "The means of weakness and debility", and the other, "a lusty winter, frosty but kindly", because men had taken care of themselves.

One important fact that should be borne in mind always when we discuss age and youth is that our intellectual and psychological age need not correspond to our physiological age. A man can retain his intellectual, spiritual and artistic faculties much longer and more vigorously than his physical faculties. There are certain things which a man can do longer than others. There are certain things which we cannot do as well after reaching a certain age - things, for example, which call for speed or sustained exertion or quick resilience or easy adaptability and easy learning. We do these things much better when we are younger. On the other hand, there are things which we do better when we are older - things which call for judgment, experience, discrimination, taste, and wisdom. Benjamin Franklin once said, "Beware of the young doctor and the old barber." In our barber we want the steady hand of youth, but in our doctor we want the wisdom and the mature skill which come with seasoned years.

Interesting is the attitude of our Bible to old age. It differs sharply from the attitude of many of the peoples of antiquity. Scriptures reveres old age, but not merely, however, because it represents an accumulation of years. There is no particular virtue or merit in living to a ripe old age. The true measure of life

is not how long we live, but how we live. Old age is revered because with it may come a harvest of ripened wisdom. "The glory of young men is their strength, and the beauty of old men is their hoary head." "The hoary head is a crown of glory," says the Bible. Not just the hoary head, not just the white hair. White hair is not any more beautiful than black or brown hair, but the hoary head which one acquires in a certain way of living bespeaks not only a beautiful way of living, but also a wealth of achievement and wisdom. It is because of this that the Bible says, "Before the hoary head thou shalt stand up, and thou shalt revere the face of the old man."

Scientists maintain that it is possible to think creatively and make valuable contributions at practically every chronological age beyond early youth. A scientist not so long ago made a study of the best work done by a group of eminent scientists and 19 out of a group of 80 men of affairs produced their greatest work after the age of 60, and in the case of 6 of the scientists, after the age of 80. In certain activities of life the older man has a definite competitive advantage over the younger man; the older doctor, lawyer, statesman, craftsman - in many ways, even the older businessman who have accumulated the experience and the know-how of their professions.

One of our rabbis declared, "If old men tell you to destroy and young men tell you to build, destroy, for the destruction which old men recommend is probably more valuable than the building which immature and inexperienced youth recommends."

The great handicap of old age consists in that it must make a much greater effort than youth to overcome certain tendencies within. The older man must make a special effort to overcome tiredness and set habit, prejudices, conservatism and complacency, a tendency to suspicion and increased self-centeredness and all the mental adhesions, the cobwebs at 50. In youth there is a spontaneous ebullience, an inner agitation, an eager out-reaching, a lusty appetite for life's adventures. The eyes of youth are bright with eagerness and questing. Age is much less eager, spontaneous, enterprising and forward-looking. Age does not crave for the wings of Icarus or the ^{Talaria} (winged boots) of Mercury - to fly, to soar, to reach the sun. Age is easily satisfied with the velvet slipper, the comfortable arm chair, the warm fireside, and - dozing.

"I find it a great and fatal difference," wrote Emerson in his Journal, "whether I court the muse or the muse courts me. That is the ugly disparity between age and youth." In later life it is we who have to court the muse if we wish to remain young in mind and spirit, and in so doing, remain younger also in body; for our mental attitudes and our stirring interests undoubtedly influence our bodies. Vibrancy of spirit, vitality of mind, alert and eager interests, the rhythm and melody of new ideals swinging through our souls - these make our bodies more alive and active, more flexible and youthful. They retard the inexorable advance of senescence.

Some of you may recall Dr. Alexis Carrel's, "Man, the Unknown". In it is a passage to which I should like to draw your attention.

The aging man should neither stop working nor retire. Inaction further impoverishes the contact of time. Leisure is even more dangerous for the old man than for the young. To those whose forces are declining, appropriate work should be given. But not rest. Neither should physiological processes be stimulated at this moment. It is preferable to hide the slowness under a number of psychological events. If our days are filled with mental and spiritual adventures, they glide much less rapidly. They may even recover the plenitude of those of youth.

Old age is sad in many cases. Old age is sad when it is dependent. Men and women should, as far as possible, employ their youthful years and their labors, their industry and thrift to insure themselves against dependence in old age. It is not good to be a pensioner either of children or of the state. But dependence is not exclusively economic dependence. One can be dependent in old age upon others because one has no inner resources of his own. One must then feed on the lives of others when one cannot draw upon the cultural and spiritual savings which he has accumulated during his earlier and more active years.

Old age is sad when it is bitter or frozen up with the hard dregs left behind by a selfish and ruthless youth and manhood, or haunted by unwelcome ghosts, or friendless because one had failed to acquire comrades through selflessness and loyalty. Old age is sad when it is not sustained by memories or ennobled by an indemnifying serenity. But old age may also be sad when it is vapid, stale and empty, when

it is rusting away, even when it is rusting away pleasantly and imperceptibly.

The thing to remember always is that one can be as active in learning, in friendship, in the performance of duty, in the tasks of citizenship, in the exercise of faith, in social service, in old age as in youth. And because one is better equipped by knowledge and experience in later life, one can then be more intelligently, and therefore, more helpfully active. Especially should one be active in learning.

"Learning keeps the soul young," wrote Leonardo de Vinci, who lived to a ripe old age and created masterpieces in his old age. "Learning keeps the soul young and decreases the bitterness of old age." We must never stop going to school, literally and figuratively - learning something new all the time, whether it is in the arts or crafts, whether it is gardening or carpentry or collecting, whether it is poetry, music or drama or a new language begun when one is 70. These are the vitamins of youth - far more effectively restorative of youth than cosmetics upon which, I understand, the women of our country spend annually more than half a billion dollars. Learning smoothes out the wrinkles of the mind and gives one a new and exciting permanent wave to the soul.

Doctors tell us that we should have a physical check-up regularly, to detect what is deficient in us, and if possible, to correct it. We need a similar check-up periodically of our mental and spiritual health. We might discover that we are starved for intellectual nutriment, and are thus becoming old before our time. We might prescribe for ourselves a new mental and spiritual diet.

There is a story told in the Talmud of the famous rabbi, Judah^{ben}/Illai, of the second century, whom a pagan once saw in the market place and looking upon his radiant countenance, exclaimed, "This man must be one of three things. He is either intoxicated, or he has just landed a big job with the government - perhaps a tax collector - or he has just found a hidden treasure." Rabbi Judah ben Illai overheard the pagan, and he turned to him and said, "My friend, I am none of these three things. I do not drink, except when I have to for ritual purposes, and when I take the four cups of

wine on Seder night, I have a headache all the way from Pesach to Shevuot--seven weeks. I've had nothing to do with government, and I assure you that I am a very poor man. I've found no treasures." "But what makes your face so radiant, so youthful, so shining?" "Why," Judah ben Illai replied, "that is simple. I am studying all the time. I study the Torah, and our Torah declares that the wisdom of a man - the intellectual quest of a man makes his face to shine bright!"

Whenever I see a radiant face, especially of an elderly person, a bright awareness in the eye, a wise alertness, I know that there is an active mind behind that face, a mind that is not rusting. One should keep learning, and try to keep himself necessary, needed - to have something to offer in terms of service or knowledge or skills which the people about you require and want. No one feels really old until he comes to feel himself no longer needed.

I salute those who, though old in years, remain indomitable. I salute those who do not succumb to the insidious becalming of oncoming years, who do not let the glory depart, whose life retains to the end its swinging motion and its uncontracted scope. I salute the men and women who know no end of voyaging, who though they are traveling westward to the setting sun, are yet enchanted by the beckoning road. "In the morning they sowed their seed and in the evening, they do not withhold their hand. For them the light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun, and if a man have many years, let him rejoice in them all."

The Fountain of Youth - where is it to be found? Why, it is to be found in the inexhaustible wellsprings within the human spirit, in the clear and leaping waters of human aspiration.

You may recall the beautiful poem of Tennyson, "Ulysses". Ulysses had been a wanderer for many years. The journey had been long and wearying. Now Ulysses is old and so are his companions, but he challenges them:

.....you and I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil;
Death closes all; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;—
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.



sermon 736.

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH
Sunday, January 22, 1950

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH
 Sunday, January 22, 1950

All through the Middle Ages there persisted a popular legend ^{regarding} a Fountain of Youth ~~a Fountain of Youth~~, which was situated somewhere in the Indies, ^{and} which possessed the power of rejuvenation. You may recall that Ponce de Leon, who had heard reports from the Indians of such a ^{miracle} ~~medicinal~~ ^{curative} spring somewhere in the New World, set out to find ^{it in the hope of having his youth and health} ~~these waters of the Fountain of Youth~~ which would ^{restore} ~~restore~~ his youth and his vigor, ^{and} as a result, ^{he} discovered Florida in 1513 - Florida, to which people are still going ^{as if to} ~~find~~ the Fountain of Youth. ^{People} ~~Men~~ are still ^{looking for} ~~seeking~~ ^{such a} that fountain for, as Talleyrand ~~once~~ remarked, "Everyone wants to live long; nobody wants to be old." Everyone would like to ^{remain young and never to obtain} ~~hold forever~~ ^{his youth even} ~~to enshrine his youth on an~~ ^{prison his youth forever} like those beautiful ^{you to and woman whom Keats saw} ~~man and maid~~ enshrined forever in their ^{spring} ~~spring~~ youth and loveliness on ^{that} ~~Marathon's~~ Grecian Urn.

But today it is to the marvelous springs of scientific discovery that people are turning for the boon of rejuvenation. From time to time a Voronoff, a Steinach, through ~~their~~ studies of gland secretions and ~~their~~ experiments in the grafting of animal glands upon human beings, seem to hold out the promise of some method of rejuvenation. A new science - the science of geriatrics - is developing today as a branch of medical science concerned with the aging process of the human body, ~~how to~~ prolong physiological health, ~~efficiency of the human organism;~~ how to keep young while growing old; ~~how to enjoy a longer period in which we can be physically and mentally and socially effective.~~

More men and women, ~~far more people~~, are becoming interested in this science to-day because more and more people are living long enough to grow old. A hundred years ago life expectancy was around 30 years. In 1940 life expectancy had risen to 62 years. In 1940 10% of the population of the United States were over 60 years of age, and it is expected that by 1980 the percentage will rise to ~~20~~ 20% of our population.

~~will be 60 years and older.~~

This poses a very grave problem of adjustment ~~for mankind~~ for the country as a whole ~~for an~~ aging population requires new ~~radically new~~ social planning in terms of industry, how to insure jobs for older people, in terms of health, and education and recreation and social security. And I do not believe that the American people ^{has} is fully awakened to the implications of this changing age level of the population ^{run} of our country. ^{TP} But ^{we are} ^{concerned} at this moment ^{however} with the individual and his personal problems and attitudes as he passes the summit of his years and begins his descent ^{into} to the long valley and the gathering dusk.

Undoubtedly, there does ^{set in} ~~come~~ a physiological decline with advancing years. It does not come at the same time to all men, nor does it come to any one man simultaneously to the whole of him. Parts of us get older than others. As one physician put it, "A 60-year-old man may have a 40-year-old heart, a 50-year-old kidney, an 80-year-old liver, and he may be trying to live a 30-year-old life."

Just when we begin to age depends, of course, on many factors, principally, I suppose, on our original physical endowment - on the inherent qualities of the genes, as it were. It also depends on the kind of care ^{or} ~~of~~ abuse we ^{give} ~~have given~~ to our system. Excess of all kinds, worries, over-work, pressure, unhappiness - these have much to do with the speed with which we start getting old. ^{one} The rabbi ^{declared} said, "Because of four things ^{one} ~~four~~ old age, springs early upon a man: ~~pounces early upon a man.~~" Because of ~~four things.~~ First of all, because of fear, ~~because of~~ worry, ~~because of~~ insecurity; secondly, because of grief caused by children - ~~that ages people very much;~~ and thirdly, because of a bad wife - this was written by a man - it can also ^{be said} ~~be~~ equally a bad husband. ^{And} ~~That ages a man or a woman very quickly.~~ And finally, because of wars, ~~because of~~ the evils which ~~come to a people,~~ ^{which come with} because of the destruction and the upheavals and the impoverishment and the terrors ~~of war~~ ^{the} ~~and all kinds of wars - economic wars, military wars, panics, depressions.~~ Another rabbi said, "Everyone who is stepped in ~~the~~

~~sical excesses of all kinds, licentiousness, the spending of the vigor and the vital~~
~~energies of his life quickly, age pounces on him.~~ *which consume the marrow and*
will have age spring upon him early?

You may recall that very beautiful second act in "As You Like It" where the melancholy Jacques portrays the seven ages of man and ~~finally~~ describes the last of the seven ages *in* a very dolorous ~~and pessimistic vein.~~ *lyric* The last scene of all is second childishness and mere oblivion, "sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste and sans everything". *his sol* And ~~just~~ when he finishes ~~that~~ soliloquy, Adam appears on the scene *- as if in rebuttal - Adam* - the old man who had ~~been~~ previously described ~~in that second act, where he described himself~~ in the following words:

Though I look old, yet I am strong and lusty.
For in my youth I never did apply
Hot and rebellious liquors in my blood,
Nor did not with unbashful forehead woo
The means of weakness and debility.
Therefore my age is as a lusty winter,
Frosty, but kindly.

Shakespeare knew of two types of old age - the one that was ~~spent~~ *which* because men had wooed 'the means of weakness and debility', and the other, *where* ~~where~~ men had taken care of themselves, ~~and therefore, reach an old age which is~~ *benefit* a lusty winter, frosty but kindly.

One important fact that should be borne in mind always when we discuss age and youth is that our intellectual and ~~our~~ psychological age need not correspond, ~~run~~ *and* parallel to our physiological age. A man can retain his intellectual ~~faculties~~, his spiritual ~~faculties~~, his artistic ~~faculties~~ *vigorous* much longer than his ~~strong~~ physical faculties. There are certain things which a man can do longer than others. There are certain things which we can ~~no longer do or~~ *not* do as well after reaching a certain age - things, for example, which call for ~~physical~~ speed or sustained exertion or quick resilience or easy adaptability *and* or easy learning. We do those things much better when we are younger. On the other hand, there are certain things which we ~~can~~ do better, ~~far better~~, when we are older - things which call for judgment ~~and reason~~ *and wisdom* ing ability, for experience, for discrimination, ~~for~~ taste, ~~for sagacity~~. Benjamin

Franklin once said, "Beware of the young doctor and the old barber." ~~There is a good~~
~~deal of wisdom in that for~~ in our barber we want the steady hand of youth, but in our
doctor we want the wisdom and the mature skill which come with seasoned years.

Interesting, ^{is} the attitude of our Bible to the ^{old} ~~question~~ of age. ^{It} ~~is~~ so differ^{ent}
^{sharply} ~~ent~~, so radically different from the attitude of ^{many} ~~nearly all~~ the peoples of antiquity.

In the Book of Job we find, "Wisdom is with aged men and understanding in length of
days." Scriptures reveres old age, ^{but not because} ~~not merely~~ years - plenitude of years which make

^{represent an accumulation of years} ~~people old.~~ There's no particular virtue or merit ~~or achievement~~ in living to a
ripe old age, ^{The true measure of life is not} ~~if it's just that and nothing more because it isn't~~ how long we live, but
how we live. ^{is revered because of the way we live} ~~But old age which brings with it a harvest of garnered wisdom, of fruit-~~
~~ful years - as I read this morning, "The glory of young people is their strength, and~~
~~the beauty of old men is their hoary head." "The hoary head is a crown of glory,"~~

says the Bible. Not just the hoary head, not just the white hair. White hair ^{is not}
any more beautiful than black ~~hair~~ or brown hair, but the kind of hoary head "which
^{bespeaks not only a} ~~one acquires in a certain way of living, a beautiful way of living" when richness of~~
^{but also a wealth} ~~years is matched is matched by richness of achievement, accumulated wisdom - that~~
~~kind of hoary head is a crown of glory.~~ ^{It is because of this that}

Therefore, the Bible says in the Book of Leviticus, "Before the hoary head ^{shall}
^{and those shall} ~~man should stand up, revere the face of the old man."~~ ^{PP} ~~Now, the best of those who~~
~~are studying the problem of old age today among Scientists~~ ^{maintain} ~~have declared that it is~~
possible to think creatively and make ~~valuable~~ contributions at practically every
chronological age beyond early youth. A scientist not so long ago made a study of
the best work, ^{done by} ~~the master work,~~ of a group of eminent scientists (and men of affairs,
and ~~he~~ found that 22 out of a group of 91 ~~eminent~~ scientists) and 19 out of a group
of 80 men of affairs ~~who had won fame,~~ produced their greatest ^{work} ~~achievements~~ after
the age of 60, and in the case of 6 of the scientists, ~~their chief contributions to~~
~~man kind were made~~ after the age of 80. ~~Creative imagination, creative intellectual~~

work, creative spiritual enterprise hasn't at all the same age limit that feats of physical prowess demand. In certain activities of life the older man has ^{a definite} ~~by far the~~ advantage over the younger man; the older doctor, ~~the older lawyer, the older states-~~ man, ~~the older craftsman,~~ in many ways ^{even} the older businessman who ^{has} accumulated the experience and the know-how of ^{his} ~~his~~ profession. ^{They} have a definite advantage in the very struggle for existence, not to speak of in other fields, over the younger man.

One of ^{our} ~~the~~ rabbis ^{deduced} said, "If old men tell you to destroy and young men tell you to build, ~~you~~ destroy, for the destruction which old men recommend is probably ~~far~~ more ~~socially~~ valuable than the building which immature and inexperienced youth recommends." ^R The great handicap of old age consists in that it must ~~make~~ a much greater effort ~~that is what many people overlook. It must make a much greater effort than~~ youth, of course, to overcome certain ^{tendencies} ~~attitudes~~ within ~~one's~~ self. They are almost ^{The older man} fatal to remaining spiritually, mentally, intellectually young and vigorous. ^{They} must ^{make a special effort to} overcome tiredness and set habits, ~~and set~~ prejudices ~~and~~ conservatism and complacency ^{and all the} and a tendency to suspicion and increased self-centeredness ^{mental adhe-} sions, ^{the} cobwebs at 50. In youth there is ^{a spontaneous} in the human body an ebullience, an agitation, an eager out-reaching, a lusty appetite for life's adventures. The eyes of youth are ^{bright with eagerness} searching and penetrating and eager and questing. Age is ^{much} ~~far~~ less eager, ^{stark} and anticipatory and agitated. Age does not crave for the wings of Icarus, ^{for} the winged boots of Mercury - to fly, to soar, to reach the sun. Age is ^{early} satisfied with the velvet slipper, the comfortable arm chair, the warm fire, ^{- sedate} and dozing.

"I find it a great and fatal difference," wrote Emerson in his Journal, "I find it a great and fatal difference whether I ^{court} ~~caught~~ the muse or the muse courts me." That is the ugly disparity between age and youth. In later life it is we who have to court the muse if we wish to remain young in mind and spirit, and ⁱⁿ ~~by~~ so doing, remain younger also in body; for our mental attitudes, ^{and stirring} our interests undoubtedly influence our bodies. Vigorancy of spirit, vitality of mind, alert and eager interests,

the rhythm and melody of new ideals swinging through our souls - ~~why~~, these ~~are~~
~~bound~~ to make our ^{bodies} ~~physical organism~~ more alive and ~~more~~ active, more flexible, ~~more~~
youthful, ~~and return~~ ^{they retard} the inexorable advance of senescence.

Some ~~years~~ ^{may recall} ago I read a book which some of you ~~may have read~~, "Man, the Unknown",
~~written~~ by Dr. Alexis Carrel, and I noted in that book the following passage:

The aging man should neither stop working nor retire. Inaction further impoverishes the contact of time. Leisure is even more dangerous for the old man than for the young. To those whose forces are declining, appropriate work should be given. But not rest. Neither should physiological processes be stimulated at this moment. It is preferable to hide the slowness under a number of psychological events. If our days are filled with mental and spiritual adventures, they glide much less rapidly. They may even recover the plenitude of those of youth.

to which I should like to draw your attention

Old age, ~~my dear friends~~, is sad in many ^{cases} ~~instances~~. Old age is sad when it is dependent. Men and women should, as far as possible, employ their youthful years and their labors, ^{then} ~~through~~ industry and thrift to insure themselves against dependence in old age. It is not good to be a pensioner ^{to the} of children or of the state. But dependence is not exclusively ~~an~~ economic dependence. One can be dependent in old age upon others because one has ~~no inner reserves~~, no inner resources of his own. One ~~must~~ ^{then} ~~has to feed~~ on the lives of others because ^{when} ~~one~~ cannot draw upon ^{the} ~~intellectual~~ and spiritual savings ^{which} ~~that one~~ has accumulated during ^{his earlier and used earlier} ~~the~~ years. Old age is sad when it is bitter, ^{or} ~~when it is~~ frozen up within the hard dregs left behind by a selfish and ruthless youth and manhood, ^{or} ~~when it is~~ haunted by unwelcome ghosts, ^{or} ~~when it is~~ friendless because one had failed to ^{acquire} ~~win~~ and hold comrades in ^{though selfless} ~~love~~ and loyalty. Old age is sad when it is not sustained by ~~tender~~ memories ^{or} and ennobled by an indemnifying serenity.

But old age may also be sad, ~~dear friends~~, when it is vapid, ~~when it is~~ stale and empty, when it is rusting away, even when it is rusting away pleasantly and ~~hardly~~ imperceptible. The thing to remember always is that one can be as active in learning, in friendship, in the performance of duty, in ^{the} ~~civic~~ tasks, in citizenship, in faith, ^{the} ~~in~~ faith,

in social service, in old age as in youth, ~~just as a~~ ^{we} live. And because ~~it~~ ^{we} is better equipped by knowledge and experience, ^{in later life} one can be more intelligently, and therefore, more helpfully active. ~~Especially~~ ^{then} one should be active in learning. "Learning keeps the soul young," wrote Leonardo de Vinci, who lived to a ripe old age and created masterpieces in his old age. "Learning keeps the soul young and decreases the bitterness of old age." We must never stop going to school, literally and figuratively, learning something new all the time, whether it is in ^{the} arts or ~~in~~ crafts, whether it is gardening or carpentry or collecting, whether it is poetry, painting, music or drama or a new language begun when one is 70. These are the vitamins of youth, far ^{more} ~~more~~ youth-restorative than cosmetics upon which, I understand, the women of our country spend annually more than half a billion dollars. Learning smoothes out the wrinkles of the mind and gives one a new and exciting permanent wave ~~for~~ ^{to} the soul.

~~Now, Doctors~~ tell us that ~~one~~ ^{we} should have a physical check-up regularly. ~~I know my doctor's told me that time and again, especially as we get older. We don't always listen to our doctors, but they keep on giving us this good advice - a physical health check-up to detect what is deficient, what perhaps is super-abundant, too, and to correct or diet, as it were - to keep us in good physical trim. Now, the point that I am making, not being a doctor - only a rabbi - is that we need the same check-up periodically of our mental and spiritual health if we want to keep trim.~~ ^{if possible} ~~Perhaps we need a new prescription as to a new mental and spiritual diet. Perhaps we are starved for intellectual nutriment, and ~~time~~ ^{we} become old before our time.~~ ^{discover that} ~~I assure you, if you do that, you will feel much younger and look much younger.~~ ^{we must}

There's a story told in the Talmud of a famous rabbi, Judah ben Illai, of the second century, ~~one of the great Sages of the Mishnah~~, whom a pagan once saw in the market place and looking upon his radiant countenance, ~~shining face~~ ^{his} this pagan exclaimed, "This man must be one of three things. He's either a drunkard, he's either intoxicated, or he has just ^{landed} ~~gotten~~ a big job with the government and is ~~extremely~~ ^{happy}."

happy and radiant about it - perhaps a tax collector, ~~which was a very profitable~~
job in those days - or he has just ^{found} ~~discovered~~ a treasure, a hidden treasure." Rabbi
Judah ben Illai overheard ~~this exclamation~~ of the pagan, and he turned to him and
said, "My friend, I am none of these three things. I ^{do not} ~~don't~~ drink, except when I
have to for ^{ritual purposes} ~~Midwah~~, and when I take four cups of wine on Seder night, ~~on Pesach~~,
I have a headache from Pesach to Shevuot ^{all the way} ~~for~~ seven weeks. I've had nothing to do
with government, and I assure you that ^{I am} ~~I'm~~ a very poor man. I've found no treasures."

"But what makes your face so radiant, so youthful, so shining." "Why," Judah ben
Illai ^{replied} ~~said~~, "that's simple. ^{I am} ~~I'm~~ studying all the time. I study the Torah, and ^{as Torah} ~~as~~
^{delays that the wisdom of a man} ~~you know~~, the intellectual quest of a man makes his face to shine ^{bright},
When I see a radiant face, especially in an elderly person, a gleam in the eye,
^{wise} ~~an awareness~~, an alertness, I know that ^{that is an active} ~~that mind behind that face~~ ^{a mind that is} ~~is very active~~,
not rusting - it's learning, interested. My advice is to keep learning, keep your ^{busy} ~~your~~
^{necessary wisdom to have a life} ~~self useful and needed~~. Get something in terms of service, in terms of knowledge,
in terms of a skill, which the people about you require and want. ~~You'll be needed;~~
~~you'll always be useful, and no one feels really old until he comes to feel himself~~
~~no longer needed, no longer wanted.~~

I salute those who, though old ^{in years} ~~and more tired~~, remain indomitable. I salute
those who do not succumb to the insidious becalming of oncoming years, ~~those~~ who do
not let the glory depart, ~~those~~ whose life retains to the end, ^{swaying} ~~to the end~~, its motion,
and its scope. ^{unconducted salute} The men and women who know no end of voyaging, who though they ~~know~~
that they are traveling westward to the setting sun, are yet ^{enchanted by} ~~unwearied~~ of the beckon-
ing road. "In the morning they sowed their seed and in the evening, they do not with-
hold their hand," ~~as Solomon said~~. "And for them the light is sweet and a pleasant
thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun, and if a man have many years, let him re-
joice in them all."

the found?
The Fountain of Youth - where is it? Why, ~~dear friends~~, it is in the inexhaustible ~~wellsprings~~ *wellsprings* of the human spirit, the ~~living~~ *unfailing* and the ~~unfailing~~ *leaping* waters of human aspiration. *clear but*

th
You may recall ~~that~~ beautiful poem of Tennyson, "Ulysses". Ulysses had been a wanderer for many years. ~~He was trying to find his home again.~~ The journey had been long and wearying. Now Ulysses is old and so are his companions, but he ~~says to them~~ *challenges* them:

..... you are I are old;
Old age hath yet his honor and his toil;
Death closes all; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks;
The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Though much is taken, much abides; and though
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;—
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

~~The Fountain of Youth is not to yield to old age.~~