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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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The importance of my world, 1952.



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## THE IMPORTANCE OF MY WORLD

January 20, 1952

In one of his letters the great English poet, John Keats, wrote, "I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds." That, to a lesser degree, my friends, is true of all men, even those who are not poets. As their imagination strengthens, they come to live not in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds, certainly in more than one world. In fact, when you come to think of it, the whole purpose of education is to introduce us into new worlds, and when you come to think of it, the whole purpose of religion is to extend and widen the boundaries of our individual lives to a point where we come to embrace in sympathy and in service other lives - our families, our neighbors, our countries, and the life of mankind.

Our personalities expand and grow as we deepen through knowledge and experience the content of our lives, as we refine our tastes and our canon of judgment, and as through sympathy and imagination we enlarge the place of our tent and stretch the curtain of our habitation.

Now, some people live only in their one little world, in their own little world. They live only to themselves, in the narrow world of their own bodies, their own tastes, their own ambitions, their ego. They are important to themselves and they are limited to themselves. They never rise above themselves. And such people really never experience the flowering of the soul. They never come to know the deeper satisfactions of unfoldment, of growth, of becoming - the teem and thrust of expanding life, the revelation of new insights, the stimulation of new contacts and new identifications. They never come to experience the throb of new purposes, the intoxication of new ideals and the glory which comes from attuning our lives to the noble music of the whole of humanity.



Other people do widen their circumference of importance to include family, even neighbor and country. And as a result, their lives are infinitely richer and fuller. They live in many worlds. They march in a great company, not alone, isolated, but somehow even these people frequently stop at geographic boundaries, at national boundaries, at creedal boundaries, at ideologic boundaries in their essential interests and sympathies. They somehow do not feel emotionally, vividly - they do not feel themselves to be also members of a universal society, even though their minds - even though intellectually they realize it. Somehow emotionally, vividly, they do not feel themselves to belong to mankind. But in very truth we all belong to one human race and are linked by one common destiny, the destiny of humanity.

This global world, this encompassing and universal society is very important to me - very important to you. It affects my destiny and your destiny more than we realize. You and I cannot ignore it even though we can push it out of our immediate awareness far more readily than we can push out other realities in our album of importance. This global world is more important to us than it was to our forefathers. It will be far more important to our children even than it is to us, and to their children after them.

Twice in our own life-time we of this country believed ourselves to live in isolated security, behind the ramparts of two great seas, and found ourselves catapulted in world wars which began in distant parts of the earth, and our fortunes and our very lives were suddenly committed to world struggles, not at all of our making or of our choosing. The world closed in upon us, took hold of our destinies, whether we liked it or not. It became very important to us. It became all-important to us - important as our own very lives. At this very moment we are involved in another war in a far-away corner of the Asiatic world, and tens of thousands of our boys have died or have shed their blood in a civil war in that far-away corner of the earth that it is not at all of our making. Korea walked in upon Cleveland and Ohio and the United States -



walked into our homes and took hold of our lives. During this week the people of the United States were solicited by the Prime Minister of Great Britain to send troops to another far-off corner of the world, the Suez Canal, to Egypt, and to involve ourselves still further in military struggles in the Far East. And our own government, which for some years now pressed and financed and directed an international organization of like-minded nations in all parts of the earth for mutual defense. Seemingly our own defense is inadequate to give us the security which we want. We need the world, or that part of the world which is ready to stand with us.

We are not sufficient unto ourselves any more, nationally and individually. We have come to realize that backward peoples whom we have never seen, whose fortunes somehow we looked upon as in no way related to ours - backward peoples in Africa and Asia whom our fathers could choose to ignore, or if they chose, could exploit and dominate - cannot be ignored by us. Our own security and our own freedom, we have realized, depend upon the improvements of the standard of living of these peoples who for centuries, countless centuries, have been the submerged and the underprivileged peoples of the earth. Lest these people fall prey to Communism and thereby still further strengthen the power of aggressive Communism in the world. Enlightened self-interest, if nothing else, has suddenly brought great sectors of mankind within our immediate and vital concern, within the orbit of our lives. That part of the world we could have ignored in the past, the whole colonial world has become very important to us.

Our children are learning to be citizens of the world to a degree which our forefathers could not think of at all. It was possible until recently for half of the world not to know what the other half was doing, and not to care. But it's not possible any more. Our children will want to learn, will have to learn more, far more, the facts more appreciably and more sympathetically and more understandingly the different ways of life and thought of peoples in the remotest corners of the earth. They will have to try to discover more areas of cooperation with them than ever before.



For they shall come to understand beyond any peradventure of doubt that in very truth they are living in One World - one world, indivisible!

We shall have to learn to live in the same world - they, our children, will have to do it, even with peoples whom we do not like and with political and economic systems of people/<sup>of</sup>whom we do not approve. The rest of the world is not there for our approval, even as we do not exist for the sake of being approved by others. We shall have to accept differences and reconcile ourselves to tensions without rushing headlong into war. We shall have to learn the art of concession and compromise, from strength and not from weakness, even as other peoples will have to learn the same lessons. But sooner or later we shall come to realize fully what we have ~~only~~ realized so far partially, that war will never give us or any nation or any group of nations monopoly for this way of life in the world, or security. We may ~~may~~ succeed in organizing the world for peace; we never can succeed in dominating the world for peace, nor can any other nation or any group of nations.

So that in the days to come, in the years to come - and I am thinking in terms of the wider perspective, the larger outlook - we shall have to think in the days to come more and more in terms of humanity, of world organization, of international programs of aid for backward masses of the earth, of international control and reduction of armaments. And we shall come to think less and less, in terms of balance of power, in terms of military preparedness, and of a hopelessly divided world, and of unbridgeable gulfs between peoples and nations. In other words, our world today is coming back - people today are coming back to the vision of the great religions of mankind, that vision of "The Father of Gods and the Brotherhood of Man" which so many practical, worldly-wise people wrote off as unrealistic, as impractical, as unattainable, as belonging to the world of the preacher and not to the world of real practical people.



The brotherhood of man, dear friends, is becoming a political "must" in the modern world, not really an ideally desirably objective, but a political and practical "must" in the modern world, if our modern world is to survive. A very real and urgent need, if our civilization is not to become completely annihilated and even the world "annihilation" - the annihilation of civilization, which a generation or two ago may have seemed very extreme and drastic, is becoming far less so in our day because the weapons of annihilation are already here - they're already here. They're available, and some desperate hand may some day use them.

I say that men are coming back to the vision of religion of mankind. Now, religion itself was slow to come around to this vision of One God and One Humanity. In the olden days people thought of the true religions as being their own, as their God being exclusively interested in the fortunes of their exclusive nation and group. Each people had its own God. Mankind was fragmentized and so was the unity. It was Judaism that brought to the world the vision of the One God, the whole universe, the Father of all men - therefore, of all men as brothers, members of one family. It was a revolutionary idea which to this day has not been fully accepted by mankind. It was Judaism that brought to the world the conception that all men, regardless of their race or creed, are acceptable to God if they follow the way of God. The non-Jew who performs the ethical mandates of the Torah, said the Rabbis, is of the same status as the High Priest in the Temple. The righteous among the nations of the world will inherit the Kingdom of God. Rabbi Maier said that when God created the first man, he gathered from all corners of the earth and molded the one man and breathed the spirit of life into him. The universal man - the first man - the essential man.

"I call heaven and earth to witness," declared our sages, "be he Jew or non-Jew, master or slave, white or black, according to his individual merit, will the spirit of God rest upon him." And through Judaism this universal conception of the One World passed to Christianity, and so spread through the world. "God has made of one blood all the peoples of the earth."



Now, mankind has been slow to accept this doctrine. In our own day, as you know, the Nazis launched a major assault not only upon the peace of the world, but upon the sanctity of this doctrine, of the equality of all men and of the rights of all men, of One World. Sooner or later we shall come to realize more fully and take to heart that no single nation or race has a monopoly on civilization. A scientist once declared that no more than 10% of the material objects used by any one people represents its own inventions. We have been borrowing through the countless centuries, one from another. The highest cultures are the result of the blending of various cultures. There are no superior races and no inferior races biologically and no pure races. There are more advanced races, more backward races, more favorably situated peoples. Frequently races have changed places in the degree and the hierarchy of their achievements and significance to the world.

Therefore, all men of whatever color or creed are of one human race and they belong to my world. They are important to me. I advance or I am retarded or I am endangered as they advance, as they are retarded, as they are endangered. And hereafter together we must move forward.

Our world has a long way to go, a long way to go through the wilderness of fear and hate and bigotry and intolerance and snobbery and conceit, of greed and of all the bloody ruck of fratricidal strife, before it will reach the far land, the good land of peace and justice for all. The millenium is not near at hand, but the day of great tribulation may be here at hand, nearer than we think, unless we begin to work far more earnestly than we have heretofore for the One World which is important to all of us.

And therefore, good friends, to live significantly and purposefully and worthily, is to believe fanatically in the importance of this, our world, our One World. To live nobly and purposefully is to work with every fiber of our being for it. Mankind has always looked forward to a golden age of unity, of reconciliation, of peace, stronger by far than the quest of the philosopher's stone which would transmute all baser metals



into gold - stronger by far than the quest of the El Dorado or the search for the Golden Fleece of fortune, or the Fountain of Youth or the Divine Nepenthe to banish all pain from the human race - I say, stronger than all these yearnings and longings of the human race through the long centuries has been the the longing for the Messianic times, for the coming of the day "when man will beat their ~~ploughs~~ swords into ploughshares and know war no more, when they shall not hurt nor destroy My holy mountain, and every man shall live under his vine and under his fig tree with none to make him afraid."

That has been the vision of the One World, and the noblest sons of the human race have lived and suffered and died to make that dream come true. And they bequeath to us a noble heritage and an undeniable challenge. And those of us who take up that challenge will make their lives richer and fuller and more important.

Everything is important - my self, my family, my neighbor, my country, my world. Religion has tried to open our eyes to see the importance of all things. Religion has taught not merely reverence for God, but reverence for Man, for all the essential human relationships in the world. The Rabbis said that when God gave the Ten Commandments and declared first of all, "I am the Lord, Thy God - Thou shalt have no other Gods before me," the nations of the earth said, "Well, God is concerned only with his own importance," but when God declared in the Ten Commandments, "Honor Thy father and ~~thy~~ thy mother," the nations of the earth realized that God was concerned as much with the importance of the human being, with the sanctity of humanity as he was with his own sacred personality. That's a profound observation. "Ye shall be holy for I, the Lord your God am holy." Life is enslaved in one climate and atmosphere of sanctity. Every human relationship is holy ground which one must approach with reference and humility. An album of importance - that is human life.



The greatest and wisest of the teachers of China many, many centuries ago - Confucious - had this to say in teaching his disciples the way to the good society.

The illustrious ancients, when they wished to make clear and to propagate the highest virtues in the world, put their states in proper order. Before putting their states in proper order, they regulated their families. Before regulating their families, they cultivated their own selves. Before cultivating their own selves, they perfected their souls. Before perfecting their souls, they tried to be sincere in their thoughts. Before trying to be sincere in their thoughts, they extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such investigation of knowledge lay in the investigation of things, and in seeing them as they really were.

When things were thus investigated, knowledge became complete. When knowledge became complete, their thoughts became sincere. When their thoughts were sincere, their souls became perfect. When their souls were perfect, their own selves became cultivated. When their selves were cultivated, their families became regulated. When their families were regulated, their states came to be put into proper order. When their states were in proper order, then the whole world became peaceful and happy.

An Album of Importance, beginning with the individual and extending state by state in ever-widening and encompassing circles to include family, neighbor, country, mankind.



1/ In one of his letters to George and Georgiana Keats - the great English poet John Keats wrote:

"I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone but in a thousand worlds."

2/ That, to a lesser degree, is true of all men, even those who are not poets - as their imaginations strengthen, they come to live in more than one world.

- For just the whole purpose, education is to introduce us into new worlds, and the whole function of religion is to expand and widen the boundaries of our ind. lives so to embrace in sympathy and service other lives - the ~~our~~ <sup>our</sup> family, ~~our~~ <sup>our</sup> neighbors, ~~our~~ <sup>our</sup> country, and mankind.

- Our possibilities expand as we deepen through knowledge and experience, the content, our lives, refine our tastes and reason of judgments and through sympathy and imagination enlarge the place of our tent and stretch forth the curtains of our habitation.

3/ Some people live only to themselves - in the narrow world of their own bodies - their Ego -

- They are important to themselves and they are linked to themselves. They never rise above themselves.

- They will never experience the flowering, the soul.

- They will never know the deeper satisfaction of growth and upliftment - of becoming - the seen and the unseen of expanding life - the revelation of new insights - the stimulation of new contacts & identification



the thrush of new purposes, the intoxication of new ideals. 12  
all the glory which comes with attaching our lives to  
the noble music of humanity.

4/ Some people <sup>do</sup> widen their circumference of importance  
to include family, even neighbor and country. Their  
lives are inspired by richer and fuller. They live in  
many new worlds. They march in a great company,  
not alone and isolated. But they stop at geographic,  
a national, a creedal, a ideological boundaries in their  
essential interest and sympathy.

They do not <sup>vaguely + thoughtlessly</sup> feel themselves to be members of one uni-  
versal society, even tho intellectually they realize it; - to belong  
to manhood. But we all belong to one human race, and  
we belong to one common destiny - the destiny of  
Humanity:

5/ This global world - this encompassing <sup>+ universal</sup> society is very  
important to me. It affects my destiny. I cannot  
ignore it - even tho I can push it out of my  
immediate awareness and readily than I can the  
other realities in my album of importance.

(a) This global world is more important to me than  
it was to my father or to his. It will be even  
more important to our children and to their children.

(b) Twice in our life-time, we of the U.S., who believe







has suddenly <sup>become</sup> ~~become~~ a great section / mankind within (4)  
the orbit of an immediate and vital concern. That  
part of the world - in fact the whole globe ~~and~~ world  
is becoming very important to us.

(9) Our children will be citizens of the world. <sup>It is possible in the past 1/2 the world has been the other 1/2</sup>  
a degree undreamed of by their fathers. They will  
want to learn more and react more affirmatively and  
sympathetically to their different ways of life and thought.  
to understand them better - <sup>and</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>from</sup> ~~direction~~ <sup>more</sup> ~~more~~ <sup>over</sup>  
cooperation than ever before. For they shall know  
by and by the contradiction / doubt that is very much  
they are living in One world - indivisible!

6). We shall have to learn to live in the same world  
even with people whom we don't like - and with <sup>poor</sup> ~~poor~~ <sup>peoples</sup> ~~peoples~~  
<sup>systems</sup> ~~systems~~ <sup>which we do not approve.</sup>  
The rest of the world is not there for our approval: - never  
as we do not exist to be approved by them.

We shall have to accept differences, and move  
ourselves to persons - without rushing headlong into  
war. We shall have to learn the art of emission and con-  
cession from others and not from ourselves even or others.  
For we shall have some or later that war will never  
give us or any nation or group of nations security  
or peace. We may succeed in org. the world  
for peace; we can never dominate the world for peace.  
We can any other nation, or group of nations.







- No single nation or race has a monopoly of civilization
- "Not more than 10%, the material objects used by any people represent its own inventions" - at Brunner
- The highest cultures are the result, blending of various cultures.

- no ~~the~~ superior races - no inferior races biologically  
and no pure races - only more advanced and  
more backward peoples - more ~~perfectly~~ pitiable - which must / can change  
places

9) All men - / Whatever color or creed - as / any human will  
belong to my word - and important time -

- I advance, or am retarded, or endangered or they are

Together we must heretofore work for peace.

Our world has a long way to go - through <sup>the epidemic</sup> 3rd 100  
hate, <sup>hysteria & violence</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>murder & anger</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> all the bloody work of fratricidal  
strife, before it will reach the far land, the portland of  
peace and justice for all. The millennium is not near  
at hand - but <sup>the day</sup> great tribulations may be nearer at  
hand than we think, unless we work more earnestly  
than ever before for the 'One World' -

War between peoples is not endemic. It is not in the nature of things. It is a perverse of human nature.



10/ To live worthily and gloriously is to believe passionately (7)  
in the imperative, ~~this~~ overused - as to tal used, as  
one used - and with every ph, as being worth for it -

Mankind has always looked forward to a golden age  
of Unity, of remembrance, of peace. - Stronger than the quest  
of the Philosopher's stone to transmute all base metals into gold,  
~~stronger than the~~ I Goads, stronger than the search for the  
hidden flower of fortune in the mountains, stronger than the  
Divine Repentance to pause all pain, has been the  
Messianic hope, man for the coming, the day when  
men will beat their swords into plowshares - when they  
shall not hunt nor destroy. "Every man shall live

11/ the noblest song, man loved and suffered and died  
to make that dream come true - and he gave himself  
to us a noble heritage and a undeniable challenge (truth)  
There who take up the challenge - make their <sup>own</sup> lives rich  
with and important.

① Album of Impulses - Everything -  $\text{note} = \frac{16}{24}$

12/ Confessions - (Jark)