

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 Box Folder 164 59 872

The song which the redeemed sang, 1952.

THE SONG WHICH THE REDEEMED SANG

April 13, 1952

My dear Friends, Passover is a holiday of song. The Seder Service, you will recall, is one joyous cantata from beginning to end. On the Sabbath of the Passover week we read in our synagoguges the "Shir ha-Shirim", the Song of Songs, the most beautiful of all love lyrics in all the literature of mankind. And also the majestic song found in the Book of Exodus, Chapter EV, the song "By the Sea", the song which Moses and the children of Israel sang after they crossed the Red Sea and found themselves in safety and in freedom - that song which was sung to the accompaniment of timbrels and dancing by Miriam and all the women of Israel, to the stirring refrain, "Sing unto the Lord, for He is highly exalted; the horse and the rider hath he cast into the sea". That song, too, that victory hymn, "Az Ya-shir", is especially chanted in our synagogues on the festival of Pesach.

The Rabbis say an interesting thing, that this "Song by the Sea" was actually the very first song which was sung to God since the beginning of creation by the people of Israel. Adam sang no song unto God, nor did Abraham who was rescued from so many dangers, nor Isaac, nor Jacob who was delivered from Esau and from the Dark Angel with whom he wrestled through the night. None of them sang the song unto the Lord, but the children of Israel, once they found themselves on the shores of the Red Sea after their deliverance, for the first time they burst forth into song. It was the new song which the redeemed sang, a new song heretofore unheard in the world.

Pesach is a holiday of song. It is, first of all, a festival of spring, and spring is the time of singing. You will recall that beautiful verse in the Song of Songs:

For, to, the winter is past, The rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; The time of singing is come. The whole world greets the coming of spring. Spring is resurrection. It is the rebirth of nature, a new life, a new hope. The whole cycle of creation begins anew. Everywhere there is the song of blossoming and budding, flowering and burdgeoning, the song of birds, the music of flowing waters. The sun shines and warms, the heart of man is stirred to a strange and joyous, tremulous ecstasy, which seeks release in song.

And so, Pesach is a holiday of song. Even as winter reminds one of death, so spring reminds one of deathlessness, immortality. Spring proclaims the welcome message that life does not end in death, but in rebirth, in eternal renewal. The Creator of nature, God, is a God of life. Death is a cold mystery of annihilation, but God has revealed to us time and again in the annual cycle of nature's renewal the glowing miracle of reborn life. "Therefore, let none despair in the face of death".

And so, you will recall those beautiful words found in the Book of Isaiah, rare and beautiful words:

Thy dead shall live, their dead bodies shall arise - Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, For thy dew is as the dew of light, And the earth shall bring the shades to life again.

God will swallow up death forever And the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.

And so, Pesach is a holiday of song. It marks again not only the springtime in nature, but it marks also the springtime in the history of our people. It
marks a new birth of freedom for Israel, the liberation which launched it upon its
marvelous career in history. "This day you are going forth to freedom in the month
of spring." It was in the springtime of the year that Israel went forth from Egypt.
And so the springtime in nature corresponded with the national springtime. The long
winter, the centuries—old winter of servitude, of enslavement, finally ended in a
spring of freedom. And so, the two became merged in the consciousness of our people.
The festival of physical resurrection and the festival of national resurrection; nature's rebirth and Israel's rebirth.

And so the matzo, or the bread of affliction which our fathers ate when they left Egypt and the unleavened cakes of the first harvest of the new cycle became one in the minds of the people. And the pascal lamb which our forefathers ate on the eve of their departure from Egypt in their haste, and the sacrifice of the firstlings of the sheep in the spring of the year - they, too, became one. Nature and history united to compose the triumphant song which is Pesach. The time of our deliverance, deliverance from the death of winter and deliverance from the long winter of our national enslavement.

It is no wonder, dear friends, that Moses and the children of Israel sang when they found themselves at last free after 100 years of slavery. It is only in very rare moments in a people's life that its soul bursts forth into such rhapsody. It is only when a people experiences the exaltation of some great new beginning, some escape from a long and galling tyranny, from a life of degradation to a new status and a new dignity. It is only when a sort of a tidal surge of new hopes sweep into the life of a people that it sings, as our forefathers sang when they found themselves free at last out of Egypt in a new world, in a new shining day of promise. And as you read that great hymn found in the 15th chapter of the Book of Exodus, you can almost hear the majestic strophes of that great drama. You first catch the echoes of the ancient dread, and of the terror of the oppressor and of the destroyer, who is bent upon pursuing the people, overtaking them, destroying them, only to end as lead in the depths of the sea. You could almost hear the sound of the breaking of the chain. You could almost hear the cry of release of the soul of a people, rat rising from the slave pens along the Nile and from underneath the lash of the task-master, and bursing forth in strength and confidence into a vast exaltation of freedom. You could almost hear the pace and the stride of the great host beginning its heroic march which was destined to take it to many lands and across many seas and into many strange vicissitudes, but which was also destined to take it always to greatness.

Into this trumpet song, the Israelites poured all their pride and all their hopes and all their faith, and all that was eternal in them. Hence, the Rabbis said that that song which begins with two words, "Az Yashir", which really means, they said, not that Moses and the children of Israel sang that song, but that the children of Israel willsing that song always in the future, "Az Yashir", not "Az Shar". That song was prophetic, they said, of all the future life of the people - that song will always remain new. Redemption would always come to the people after its periods of slavery and degradation.

And so, you will recall on Seder evening a mysterious person hovers over that ancient and beautiful ceremony, a mystic personality, the personality of Elijah, the porphet, for whom a special cup of wine was set aside on the Seder table, and for whom the doors are flung wide open during the service, inviting him to come in.

Elijah, the forerunner of the Messiah, the herald of freedom and emancipation not alone for the people of Israel, but for the whole of mankind; the Messianic faith of the good day to come, of the light that will grow unto the perfect age. Elijah, the prophet, symbolizes this eternal song of hopefulness. A thousand years after the destruction of the second Temple, the great Hebrew poet, Halevi - Judah Halevi, who lived in Spain in the midst of terrible persecution, wrote a song whose first words are, "Where is the God of Elijah? Why doesn't He manifest Himself? Why doesn't redemption come?"

Well, 900 years were to pass before the God of Elijah made answer to that question, when in our own lifetime the God of redemption appeared unto the people of Israel. The State of Israel was reestablished after nearly 2,000 years, and the ingathering of the exiles began and "the redeemed began to sing anew a new song." A strange history, a strange and prophetic song.

Now, what does this song say, this "Az Yashir"? Well, it's not a song of vengeance. The children of Israel, when they left Egypt, did not express their anger and their wrath against the Egyptians who had enslaved them and their forefathers for four centuries and invoked imprecations upon them. It's not a song of vengeance at all. In fact, the Rabbis say that when the children of Israel finally crossed the Red Sea, the angels wanted to burst forth into song, a song of triumph, and God said unto them, "My handiwork is drowning in the sea, and will you sing songs?" There was not a motif of vengeance or national triumph in that song. It is a song in praise, not of the people of Israel, but in praise of God. It doesn't extol Israel. It extols God. "I will sing unto the Lord for He is exalted." "It Thy hand, the Lord, that is exalted in might."

If the people felt that they possessed any strength at all or that in the future they would possess any strength at all to face their trials and tribulations and all the vicissitudes of fortune, that strength came to them from God. "My strength and my song is God." And it is God who guided them, and it is God who will guide them throughout their history. That you find in that song, too. "Thou wilt lead in Thy mercy those people whom Thou hast redeemed." God's providential guidance of the people of Israel throughout its history - that is the refrain of this great song.

And finally, that their destiny under God is not to subdue enemies, not to conquer territories, not to rule other nations. "God will lead them to His holy sanctuary, that sanctuary which Thy hands, O Lord, have established." Theirs is to be a spiritual destiny, a "habitation of holiness". They were redeemed, not in order to enslave others, but to redeem others, to become "a light unto the nations". "Never, never forget Egypt," our people was admonished, a dozen times through the Bible and the books of Moses, through the prophesies of the great prophets of later centuries, is this theme stresses, emphasized, over and over again. "Remember, you were a slave in the land of Egypt." Therefore, help to emancipate other slaves. Be just to strangers because you were a stranger in a strange land. The redeemed must become the redeemer of

mankind.

They must bring about a condition of society where righteousness and justice will be the share of all men, and where God alone will rule, and that's the epitome of the song. "God willrule forever and ever."

The Rabbis say that the children of Israel sang that song because they were inspired by the Holy Spirit. They saw their destiny clearly because they believed in it firmly and because they believed, they sang. "They believed in God and in His servant Moses; then they sang. Because of the faith which was theirs, they were privileged to sing the song."

But songs, my friends, are frequently forgotten and both words and melody grow dim, especially when the heart no longer believes and the inspiration is no longer there. The saddest things in our lives is that the songs of our youth are forgotten in our maturity and in our old age, and our heart become emptied of song and the fires of spring burn low unto extinction. And "then there is nearness in our soul." Blessed are those who remember in their old age the songs of their youth.

Now, the great man Moses wanted the people of Israel to remember, never to forget the great song of their destiny, the shining covenant of their immortality.

God did not want them to forget. We read in the Book of Deuteronomy,

Now, therefore, write this song and teach it to the children of Israel, and have them repeat it, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swore unto their fathers, flowing with milk and honey, and they shall have eaten their fill, and waxen fat, and turned unto other gods, and worshipped them and despised Me, and broken by Covenant, then it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are come upon them, that this song shall confront them as a witness.

Are you ever confronted by your youth? Does a stray melody of your youth ever come into the rush or the monotony or the drabness or the complacence of your maturing life? The children of Israel did not wait 40 years until they came into the promised land to forget their song. Three days after they beft Sinai and came into the wilderness of Shur and found no water, and a little later they came to Marah

where they found littlexwax bitter water, they forgot their song, their song of gratitude and thanksgiving and confidence and faith, and they began to murmur against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" and grumbling and complaining and threatening apostasy and rebelliong replaced the song of freedom. There was no more faith and so there was no more song.

I read you this morning out of two magnificant psalms, from the 150 psalms of the Book of Pslams, psalm 105 and 106. Both of them are built around the theme of the exodus, what preceded it from the days of the patriarchs, and what followed it, and the two psalms taken together describe this transformation, this maxta metastasis, if you will, if a great song of faith and of a great heroic mood which sinks into course and strident discord, and into triteness and banality and worse.

Psalms 105 speaks of God's marvelous works for Israel, all the marksof favor which he showed them, how though few in number, he suffered no man to do them wrong. For their sake he reproved kings and redeemed them from Egypt; how He brought forth His people with joy and His chosen ones with singing; he He led them and fed them in the wilderness and gave them a land for their possession, "that they might keep His statutes and observe His laws."

But, they had down iniquitously. They dealt wickedly. They gave no heed to these wonders. They remembered not the multitude of his mercies. And then Psalm 106 proceeds to recount all the acts of backsliding, or murmuring, of idolatry, of Just, of jealousy, of defilement which are recounted in the Torah, so that the Lord was constrained to surrender them into the hands of their enemies and to punish them.

Yes, the people of Israel frequently forgot their spring song. All peoples do. They sink low through their iniquity. And in the case of Israel, they rise again; they arose again - always they arose. Never did they entirely forget the burden of their historic psalm. It haunted them and reclaimed them. "In the night the song is with me." They returned, time and again, chastened and repentant to their covenant and to their mission.

It was not easy, my dear friends, for a people to substitute the yoke of the law for the yoke of Pharoah, or to realize that physical liberty without spiritual self-liberation is really another form of slavery. Moses tried to teach them that. He told them that the purpose of their emancipation was that they may worship God and become leaders of men in the service of God. Soon after he led them out of Egypt, he brought them to the foot of Mt. Sinai and gave them a law, a moral law, to guide them in their new life of freedom, to discipline them in their new life of freedom. But they failed to understandhim. All they wanted was to be free, to do what they wanted. They wanted food, they wanted drink, they wanted ease, they wanted comfort. They were not willing to pay the price for freedom. They were not willing to make any sacrifices for freedom. Given food and drink and a few less lashes, they would have been satisfied to remain in the slave pens of Egypt. They were restive under restraint. They were impatient of hardships. They were disloyal to leadership. They simply did not know what freedom is. They did not realize that freedom, took imposes burdens upon men. Bonds of love - that is, self-willed and self-imposed and gracio s bonds, but bonds nevertheless, and without these bonds there is no freedom - only license and anarchy and chaos and despotism and enslavement.

Man must always be a servant. Hischoice is whether hewants to be a servant of man, or a servant of God. Man must always serve. His decision is whom to serve, what to serve. The greatest of all Hebrew poets, whom I mentioned a moment ago, Yehuda Halevi, in one of his magnificent songs, wrote: "Those who are the slaves of time, of the temporarl, of the material, of the physical - they are the slaves of slaves, but the slave of God, he alone is free. Therefore, whatever other men may seek as his lot in life, my lot will be God, my soul declared."

Our age, dear friends, is being torn and tortured with this issue of freedom. Two world wars were waged in our life time to achieve it and to defend it, and there is less of freedom in the world today than in many generations because most people don't understand what freedom is and how to achieve it and what to pay for it.

. .

Let those who wish to preserve freedom or to win it, let those who wish to keep the song of freedom in their hearts remember. The first and foremost freedom must be grounded in a great faith. You must believe. Believe in a God of freedom, then you will fight for freedom.

The great Thomas Jefferson perhaps understood the philosophy of democracy more than any other American who wrote our Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson declared, "Can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis - a conviction in the minds of the people that their liberties are the gift of God?" It is only as people come to understand that the liberties which we have are a gift of God, that to preserve their liberties we have to serve in the spirit of God, that freedom will abide among men.

We must make sacrifices for freedom. Freedom and fleshpots do not always go together. "Offer the sacrifices of justice." It is only as mankind will make those sacrifices which justice demands that freedom will endure - justice to the underprivileged, to the wronged, to the oppressed, to the poverty stricken, to the backward peoples of the earth - only as we learn to make sacrifices to raise them to higher levels of humanity and wellbeing, only as we establish justice in our own gates, as we abolish poverty, the dangers of unemployment and economic insecurity and discriminations among men, only as we serve God and the things of God, will liberty come to endure in our midst.

What the world needs today, my dear friends, in this age of pessimism, seeming hopelessness, in this winter of our discontent, is anew springtime, a new spring song. That spring song will not come to the hearts and to the lips of men unless it wells up from a rediscovered faith. If people will return to the main-springs of the inspiration of allthat is noble and good and durable in society - God and the law of God, then freedom will come to be the possession of all men. Then all the redeemed of the world will sing a new song of humanity and peace, of justice and of brotherhood.

beg. to end. — but the Soblath of Reserve contain from the rurst beautiful bout byrie of all betwaler in read in our representation of the Bull- Ex. Chapter of which were and the churchen of Lond on the Bull- Ex. Chapter of the Red Lea to september the song which was surely to the accompanion of finished and demain or him and the women to be the women to be the song which was surely to the women to be the song of the song which was surely to the women to be the song of there into the sea" - this victory lynn is also specially chanted in our nurgous on 100 pertral. It have song which was surg to back from the stand by a man the creation, the hold. O adam & abroham, Isave, Joseph feet him the dudon parael hut forth cut fay to god been delivered. It was soll soll solls soll soll a new my. healthou unhard in the wold-3/. When 1000, a holdery of Say & Itis, furt, all, the brokens 2 Phruy - and thing is a fine / Sing my: Fu, lo, the warter is part, "The rain is over and fore; The planers offen on the earth, 'The truin pour in come The whole world posets the zoning des-hit a new fresh of the whole material a new life, a him hope. The open of

creation begain answ- Everywhen then are thousand and great of the sure of the 4/ Even as winter reminds was phythodain to fining reliends on a go do thereway, g visualatty. Ly dre not end end in doctor, but in relieft - in several remind - The creator , hahir, fool, is Ford, has revealed to us, your and again, the planing his hade g vlom bje: Hough, lit wom derpais. They dead shall live, they deal brokes shall crise anak and seing, so that dwell in the dust-For they down is in the deer of light-and the earth shall dwing to he shall to be?" "God will mallow of death of one for the fall fears"
and the last ford with wife away than from Hall fears "

Things or or is a holder of confident my state. It is a holder of the matter that he had not not the matter than the holder of the matter than the holder of the matter than the holder of the matter than the hold of the matter than the holder of the matter than the matter than the holder of the matter than t Hos work the how but I fredom for broad, which launder of when its marrelles cores as a nation, pill plis 2015 plis 2015 to 100 ? It was in the Hungton of the year that I have

Went faith from Eg- Spingtim in hater compands with it water to Thurstone - The lay centures lay hute got sempres suded as on - the forbrows of plegned remembers and markened remembers the come merged - hating relate and branch which! The havet, the pews again became one, the freschal lawt, and the menfre the firsthy, the sheet on the pung the are one; hatige and Christop vinted to capitary the Liamphant song of PIDD-MIDIO /16 - the Line of our deliverages from the deaths writer, and the houter of our secondary 6). no worden were huse and the children of brail savy. When they from the year us g slave,

"I when children , Is finally crossed the Med La - pursues - "I and Knew ers to be knew plus free they hart forth into favy!

Moses of the chil. I snart we are told say thus sory - and Winder "fork a trinkel in her hand, and all the normer went out of the her with trulal and with down and she led there is Lugar this way whose he this whaii is "Song wents the land, by the or highly likelifed, the have and the will hath he theme with the sea. It is a wag or hyman of the third hopes in an of the thereway thereof the horse of wishing the search of the world. It is referred to a hill slin soll.

If is the sony of however. by autum Pater - Halan - compand a floring from home has been sold by short pli using the phenden sold in the phender was winfrakt in the natural the of the of the start of the order of t the the had an occarios to my man a my fred in the form. life that it sure trust forth in such shapedy - It is only when it experiences the excellation of the pour, here defice any - and except form a long and falling framing and mise for a life before of departments to states and departments, the a treat surger of new hopes and prospect - that it vivips in

fre at lest in a new world - and a new day. a one can adment hear in the majenti shoppes, this without he selves the avenint direct the from the applies of the defth of the seed to the defth of the seed the defth of the seed the defth of the seed the seed the defth of the seed of one can which the pare and which of a fruit dring which of herois many which was distinct to take there there hites has a way and many land and without Way veritated, but dusy to quature. huf the start to a " swelvery which for hards their finds there have their fride their house their house their house their house their faith - all that we extend in them. Hence The Robbis dielars: 20%, 5/6-)
The Robbits dielars: 20%, 5/6-) -pillin into shar and On Gade - Jon - 1 71/6 - Memarie three to sur to 7/. on side _ Don - 101/6 come 1000 frs. after destruction. Holder sill! 3

hyathing TEXILS - - 21/1/1 / 201 3/20 2016 8). What does are find in that they sel, 3h -? Not Vengeones. - 2018 NIGN -The fraise, in harfast fraise of Ird- has extelling easexpeted - was perfect of 12 3/12 2 2/11 - They haved ... If the people persons any short at all - a will person of - 451 [d - 31 1)16/ 158 (4) It is god who has purded them and will find them though hutby: while Is pro 730 nz NISS (d) Phair disting vide ford - as not to solder lumb, to conjues territion, to und order natures. Fol adl bad them to His like saucturery Copy Their will be of the desting = 6 hob/aten of lothies (Siz 3 11) They were reduced - not to earland others, but to (a). To buy about a condition somethy when Sol

8/. They saw all that - 137 - clearly - and they hibered [7 in it find, - and heaven they luhers they sain! - 2161 3/2 HASE BLAN 3/2 11/1/1/= > > 1/1 21/1 1 > > 1/1 1 & D/11/10 D/10 2 -4. But sorp an frequently for often — and let und and male the information - ask when the heart is long helical - and the information is not lives is that the sorps of our youth an longither in our maturety or are all age — and are hearts are confitied of sory and the fries plans have hearts line outs open him — and thomas in our solds!

In out opportunition — and those is bannown in our solds!

The great more dud not want his hope of him him was lets

Out any their destroy— there is beginned in the mission lets. and for ded not want them to fight it. In we are the of any have then report it, that the sory may be a witness In me against the children, Snew For when I shall have trught them with the land which I sure vito their father, planing with well and hover, and they shall have eaten their fill, and western fait, and turned Units other 18ths, and unhight them, and dispused hu, and brother any Conenant, then it shall come to pass, when many evils and fruitles

left Jinai and Cam with the Wilderson of Flues - and found (5 no nate and a but let they cam to marats, they could not g gratituel, thanks in, serphere and faith - and they began to numes against hors - saying What shall are doubts. grundly, complaining, threatury, whether where the song & freedoms. There are no were faith - and there are zero were song -9/. Then are 2 mayor feart pralm - pralm 105 and 106 - (1 read party them to year this morning)- which describe this heriz word - into the assent, into the hers are bondity Both proling any hart as the them, the Exoches - what want the many hard of the should be should suffered no wan to do then king " for them sale to refrance lays. her the reduced them from Egypt, and led them in the walders and feed them how he bright furth His fugle with foy His chan ones with ruying" how he had them and fact them in the vildures and fact them in the vildures and fact they my lit lef If is started and observes her laws. But they had down wingwitney, they death weekery the multitude of the viewes, and Balus freeds the recourt of the act of relieber of the features, the features of deformants.

recorded in the solx - so that the Sail was contrawed to (9) surreverses them with the hand of their enemies to furnish them. they entirely first the bruder, their history they returned them and velound them. , 18 13rb 3/10 - They returned them. , 18 13rb 3/10 - They returned them. Charles and referrant to their coverant and their mission. 10). It was us ear for the people to substitute the Jose the how In the good of Pharass - on to really that plryweal hours nothant spentrud blerakis - is and aus the Jour slavery Moses had hard to head them. He told them that the purpose, their emanespatas is the for nortify ford. Som after he led their ord I Et. he took them to desighter then in the first life. I freedown. fre of failed to underland him. all they would have they would ford and direct and lase and comfort - They were not milely to pay any price for their fredom - to make any sources for it - Tiven ford and and and lew laster they would have heer centert to remain on the slaw-heir Eging then wer resture under verhaut, distoyal to lander hips When hen - 323/c x11/2/1, the sur, self and and

self auford and pains bonds - but bonds were there - without them (10 than & are freedom - only becase and anardy + whow and derfor. to have must always he of several. Her chores is whether the best of several from, a reservent from. - bub 61358, 354 /42 1350 Halin'-- 40 th 35/ 1/2 2, 35x - 12 po Briss NX 、1との) コンルーラ"ノアか 11). Our age is being torn + tortund one this issue of Freedoms.

Two world wan were writed to achieve on defend it. - There as less (it in world to-day than - in many peneraties - Let then who wish to nave it - in win it - who would the Sony of Freedom in their lives with freedom. In a Sohny Faik - - Nilel- is a fort standard Throw Jefferen! "Can the liberties of a nation he thought secure when I we have removed their only from him - a conviction in the unids I the people that their liberties are the geft I look?" a half saenfur frit - Fredom + Floringers do and always or frigather - further - establish the security strucks - establish the security strucks - Seef-reshauit - toleraser - companier - ford-will ball her a her stong of the the the fang will come to the the fang will come