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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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Lights which can never be dimmed, 1952.



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LIGHTS WHICH CAN NEVER BE DIMMED

December 14, 1952

My dear friends, on all of our festivals we kindle lights, but especially on the festival of Chanukah. Light is a dearly beloved symbol in our religion. God is likened to light. "The Lord is my Light and my Salvation." The Torah is likened to light.

"The commandment is a candle and the Torah is light." The soul of man is likened unto light. "The soul of man is the light of God." In front of our Ark in our synagogues throughout the world is the "Ner Tamid", a perpetual light, and at death we kindle a light as a symbol of immortality.

The first act of creation, we are told in our sacred book, was the creation of light. "And God said, let there be light. And God saw the light and it was good." Until then there was darkness and chaos, , darkness upon the face of the deep. And by that act of God, light was divided from darkness.

"And God divided the light from darkness, order from chaos."

Now, in the spiritual and intellectual ~~Life~~ of man also in the beginning, there was darkness upon the face of the earth - ignorance and superstition and fear,

a formless void and emptiness. And then, the seers of mankind, divinely inspired, said, "Let there be light," and they began to divide the light from the darkness. And slowly knowledge and truth pushed back the thick curtains of darkness, ignorance and superstition and fear, and light began to illumine man's onward way in the world.

Now, my dear friends, in the physical world day and night have their appointed times, but that is not the case in the spiritual world and intellectual world. Here light and darkness are constantly at war. There are no fixed cycles of light and darkness. There are no permanent victories. There can be "Darkness at Noon-time". And there is a light which is really darkness, and the brightest day of humanity can suddenly be enveloped in thick darkness. Man can begin again to grope at noon-day as if it were night, for there are always those who would like to extinguish the spiritual



and intellectual light of the world. There are forces of darkness in humanity. There are what Job called those who rebel against the light, who feel that they can perform their nefarious purposes and deeds better in the dark. They are afraid of the light of reason, the light of truth, the light of investigation. They prefer the mask and the screen and the cover and the curtain, the twilight and the gloom. "Deep darkness is morning to all of them," said Job. "For they are friends with the terrors of deep darkness."

Now, who are these people who rebel against the light, for whom deep darkness is morning and who are the friends of the terrors of night? Why, they are the people who burn men at the stake because of the light which is in them which is a threat to their blindness. They are the people who torture and destroy men because their political and economic views are a threat to their embattled dogmas and to their entrenched privileges. They are the people who made bonfires out of books, books written by men whose origins they do not like and whose ideas they find hateful - the kind of bonfires which the Nazis kindled, where a howling mob danced through the night around burning heaps of books written by people whom they did not like, and of ideas which they abhorred, in the hope of destroying, as their leader, Goebbels, said at that time, "Jewish intellectualism" and the spiritual foundations of the November Republic. Such have frequently danced around funeral pyres of books in the hope of destroying the light that is in them.

Among these rebels of light are the people who would like to prohibit, and succeed in prohibiting, free speech, free thought, free communication among men, who put shackles on the mind of man and scourges over the independent spirit of people. In our days the Fascists and the Nazis and the Communists, the witch hunters, the bigots - all of them belong to this ancient order of the rebels against light.



Then there are those people who bring false lights to mankind - "ignis fatuus" - deceptive doctrines which have the appearance of light, like a mirage, which only mislead men into ways of shadow and death, the kind of light which blinds men with their destructive brilliance. Men become dazed by that light for a time, but their souls are not illumined with it. They excite and lure men on to their destruction.

Lucifer is another name for Satan - Lucifer. The word, Lucifer, however, means a beam of light - "lux ferre" - but he was a bringer of false light, the light of pride and rebellion against God and the things of God. And so, Lucifer became the prince of darkness, the angel of death.

And then, my friends, there are those who would confound light with darkness, of whom Isaiah said: "Woe unto those people who call evil good and good evil,

who say that darkness is light and that light is darkness,

and sweetness for that which is bitter." These are the cynics and the scoffers, the confounders of human values; these are the people who take great delight in muddling the minds of men and disordering their clear, ethical judgments and principles, not for the sake of any higher ethical disciplines or higher ethical standards, but in order to justify to themselves their own moral looseness and slovenliness and depravity. All these people in every age and in every land are the enemies of the light of civilization, . Against them the true lovers of light, the true devotees of light must wage incessant warfare.

And Chanukah tells of just such a war. And if you wish to know "where is the way of the dwelling of light and where is the place of darkness", read the story of Chanukah.

What were the Macabees fighting for really? What were they fighting to defend in the 2nd century before the common era? Why is the victory so important to us and to mankind? Antiochus, who ruled over a part of that great empire which Alexander the Great



had established before him - Antiochus, the Syrian Greek, had forbidden the Jews to practice their religion. Why had he forbidden the Jews to practice their religion? The pagan rulers were as a rule very tolerant of other peoples' religions. Antiochus was an exception. Antiochus had great political ambitions. He wanted to consolidate his empire for a more powerful offensive against other peoples whom he sought to conquer. To consolidate a people, he believed that you have to organize them not only militarily and politically and economically, but also, spiritually, intellectually, make them one, monolithic. And among all the peoples in his far-flung empire with whom he had very little difficulty in submerging them into one spiritual pool, as it were, in making them one integrated, according to his light, there was only one stiff-necked people whom he could not coordinate - the Jews. They had always stood out as an island of spiritual resistance in a sea of engulfing Hellenic paganism. The Jews differed in their religion, looked upon their religion and morality as superior to those of the peoples about them and refused to surrender what they regarded as superior, worthy of preservation. They refused to worship the state and the symbol of the Emperor, the king. In every shrine and temple of the ancient world a central place was given to the bust of the emperor who symbolized the state, who symbolized the supreme authority of the state in the moral light of the people. The Jews refused to tolerate a bust of any human being, of any king or ruler, in their sanctuary. Only God to them was worthy of adoration. God was above emperor and above state. The moral law was supreme to the law of the state.

The moral standards of the pagan world in those days were shamefully low. It was a civilization which, in spite of all its surface brilliancy, was made ugly by brutal slavery, by an insensate attitude to human suffering, to human dignity, the sanctity of human life. For the delight of the people, arenas were established throughout the empire where man was compelled to fight with beasts. Gross moral laxity in private and



and family life was prevalent - a world in which everything belonged to the strong, to the ruthless, the rapacious. Nothing was done to mitigate the hard lot of the weak and the small and the old and the orphan and the widow, a world which knew little of pity and compassion and charity, and in that world the Jewish people alone, trained by centuries of the Torah, or a moral code which taught love of one's neighbor and consideration for the stranger, and charity for the poor, and compassion for the orphan and widow. The Jews alone maintained a standard of life, a conception of life which challenged the whole pagan world. Antiochus was determined to stamp out this revolutionary, challenging, anti-pagan civilization out of existence. It endangered his world, his way of life, his power. And so he prohibited the practice of Judaism.

The attack of Antiochus was not so much on the political independence on the Jews of Judea - they had no political independence in the 2nd century before the common era. It was an attack on their spiritual independence. He was determined to uproot ideas, to extinguish lights. And so he invaded the country, he invaded and defiled the Temple, desecrated its Jewish altars, he set up images of pagan gods. And then those who were the true devotees, the lovers of light, led by an intrepid spirit, Mattathias and his brave sons, raised the standard of revolt to preserve their faith, to preserve their light for themselves and their descendants. They were few in numbers. They were weak, but there was a light which could not be dimmed, and so the few grew into numbers, and the weak grew into strength; from gorilla warfare among the mountains of Judea they descended into the plains ~~wick~~ and met up with the powerful armies of Antiochus and defeated them. Then they returned to the Temple which had been desecrated and cleansed it and rededicated it and set up their light, which would not be dimmed.

The Rabbis have the beautiful legend which is well-known to you that they found in this darkened Temple a small cruse of oil which could burn and last one day, and by a miracle lasted eight days. The miracle is not the important thing. The idea behind the miracle is the important thing.



Light grows. One light kindles another. And one little light can banish a great deal of darkness. When one light goes out, it only reveals another light burning. True light shines on increasingly and reaches places and peoples and ages that one does not suspect.

I wonder whether many of you read that little newspaper item which appeared a few days ago in our press. It comes from Stockholm, December 10th:

A middle-aged man and his small daughter arrived at the Grand Hotel last night and demanded to see Dr. Selman A. Waksman, winner of the 1952 Nobel Prize in medicine.

He was refused at first but persisted and was finally received. With the little girl he walked up to Dr. Waksman, and said: "This is my daughter Eva. Five years ago she was stricken by meningitis and the doctors had already given up hope when the news of your discovery of streptomycin reached us. The drug was rushed to the hospital and saved her life.

"At a time when so much time, money and effort are spent on devices to kill people, we would like to pay our tribute and express our gratitude to a great scientist who works to save human lives."

The little girl handed Dr. Waksman a bouquet of five red carnations - one for each year she has lived so far as a result of his discovery of streptomycin.

Here is a light that is never dimmer, the light of science. No true light is ever dimmed, for it is not this little girl alone who was saved. Other little girls, other men and women have been saved by Dr. Waksman's great discovery, and the world's gratitude to him is not limited to this little girl or to this age of ours alone. It is a light which grows. "And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn the many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever," we read in the Book of Daniel.

In this connection, I was reminded of a book which I read a year or two ago about another eminent physician and pathologist, Dr. Joseph Goldberger, the conqueror of pellagra. Someone wrote a book about him and very appropriately called that book, "Trail to Light." Trail to light - that's it. All those human beings who bear witness to the



truth, who give wings to man and teach him to soar, to every pioneer who goes beyond, who push further away the borders of darkness, every son of man who stands firm and fearless in defense of their faith and their conviction - all these men are the makers of the trail to light.

Alexander Pope paid a tribute to Isaac Newton which might well be paid to everyone who kindles the beacon of truth, insight, goodness, faith, in the world. Alexnader Pope wrote:

Nature and nature's laws  
Lay hid in night;  
God said: Let Newton be  
And all was light.

Now, what did this victory of the Maccabees, which saved Judaism and the whole Judeo-Christian tradition for mankind - what did this victory prove? Why are we so proud and happy over this victory? Why do we celebrate it from year to year?

Well, good friends, the freedom of the human mind cannot be permanently confined; the vision of the human soul cannot be ever entirely extinguished; the devotion of the human heart cannot be outlawed; chains can shackle human beings only as long as they are content to be servile; no one can set a man free - a man must free himself; man is his own dungeon and his own escape; true light can never successfully be dimmed. Those are great saving truths for men to remember in our own day.

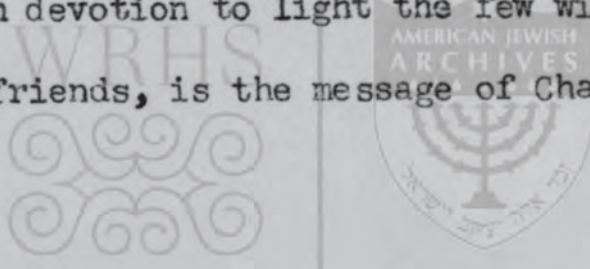
Before the Maccabees could rededicate the Temple, they had to rededicate their own lives themselves to the things for which The Temple stood. And once having done so, it was only a question of time before the enemy would be driven out and the lights would be rekindled in the desecrated shrine. Chanukah is not the rededication of the Temple or the place; it's the rededication of the soul of man to that which builds Temples to the Living God.

In our day, my dear friends, the lights of freedom are going out all over the world. Human rights, the faith of man - they are being endangered by the rebels.



There is an onslaught upon light in our day in all directions. There are brutal forces invading the Temples of society. If that spirit of the Maccabees is rekindled among men and women today, if men and women begin to rededicate themselves to light, to freedom, to truth, faith, - having that, it is only a question of time until the forces of darkness will be driven back. But failing in that, the Temples of mankind will remain desecrated and other Temples will likewise be desecrated. This is a struggle of the spirit which is going on in the world today -a desperate struggle, such as took place nearly 22 centuries ago in the country of Judea, whose outcome affected the course of civilization for centuries and centuries thereafter.

The cry is for some Mattathias to raise the standard for faithful sons to rally to that standard, and for the few not to lose faith in themselves and the weak not to become discouraged, for with devotion to light the few will become many; the weak will become strong. This, good friends, is the message of Chanukah.





1) on all our festivals we kindle lights - but esp. on festival of Shmini Atzeret  
Light is a dearly beloved symbol in our religion  
God <sup>אֱלֹהֵינוּ</sup> ; Truth <sup>אֱמֶת</sup> ; Soul <sup>נֶפֶשׁ</sup> ;  
In front of our altar - Shema Yisrael -  
At death - we kindle - Symbol of Immortality -

2) The first Act of Creation - וַיְהִי עֶרְבָא - and God עָשָׂה

There was darkness and chaos until then וַיְהִי עֶרְבָא  
By that act - God divided light from darkness - וַיִּבְרָא

- order from chaos.

⇒ In the sp. and intell. bps, man<sup>too</sup>, at the beginning - there  
was darkness when the ps, the deep - יָמָּה and  
void & formlessness  
חָשֶׁךְ - וַיְהִי עֶרְבָא - וַיִּבְרָא

And then - the divine in spirit sees man & manhood -  
said: וַיְהִי עֶרְבָא - and they began to divide the light  
from the darkness. And slowly known body and truth  
pushed back the thick darkness & ignorance  
and superstitions and fear - and light began to illumine  
man's outward body in the world

3) In the physical world - day and night - have their appointed  
times but not in the sp. & intell. world - Here by light and  
darkness are constantly at war! there are no fixed  
cycles - or permanent victories. There can be "Darkness"  
at noon-time



There is light which is <sup>really</sup> ~~dark~~ darkness -

The brightest day can suddenly be enveloped in gross darkness -  
and men ~~suddenly~~ begin "to peep at noonday as in the night"

4/ For there are always ~~evil forces~~ <sup>those</sup> who would bring to  
exterminate the sp. + intell. light of the world.

There are forces of darkness. There are what I call

ST 13 in - those who rebel against the light - who  
feel that ~~they~~ can perform their nefarious deeds better  
in the dark. They are afraid, the light of reason =

truth <sup>investigation</sup> - they prefer the mask, the screen, the cover,  
the twilight and the gloom.

"Deep darkness is near to all of them -

For they are friends with the terrors of deep darkness"

5/ These are the people who burn men at the stake here.  
of the light which is in them - a threat to their blindness

These are the people who torment + destroy men here. their  
pol. or ~~other~~ <sup>democratic</sup> ~~views~~ <sup>views</sup> are a threat to their  
embattled dogmas; and entrenched privileges.

These are the people who make bon-fires out of books  
written by men whose opinions and ideas they find  
and hate. <sup>May 1933 - Franz Joseph Ratz</sup>  
~~(Gnostics)~~ - showing work = "Jew intellectualism"

These are the people who prohibit free speech - free



(3)

- ignis fatuus

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הוא העלם חכם



The cynics, the scuffers, the confounder of values, ~~those~~ <sup>judgment and</sup> <sup>principles</sup> (4)  
who takes delight in muddying & disordering clear ethical <sup>principles</sup>  
not for the sake of higher ethical disciplines - but in order  
to justify moral looseness and slovenliness & depravity -

9/ All these people in every age & in every land - endangers the  
- light of civilization - 21/11 1321  
Against them the lovers, light must wage incessant  
war.

10/ 21/11 ~~tells~~ such a war - And if you wish to know "where  
is the way to the dwelling of light and where is the place of  
darkness" - read the story of 21/11

→ What were the Maccabees fighting to defend in 2 C.?  
- Antiochus had forbidden the Jews to practice their religion  
- To consolidate J. stiff-necked individuality - Alone  
- Island of its own kind in Sea of Paganism (Pagan, Hellenic)  
- Ref. was diff. Moral code was diff.  
- Refused to worship the State in the Symbol of the Emperor -  
- Would not tolerate a lust - only God is worthy of  
adoration - Alone Emperor and State - Moral Law!

- Moral standards of pagan world - shamefully low  
- Brutal Slavery - Cruelty - Greeds -  
- Insuperable to human suffering - dignity & sanctity of human life  
- Low moral laxity in private & family life  
- A world in which all things belonged to the State -



- the ruthless - the rapacious
- nothing to mitigate the hard lot of the weak & the small
  - pity - compassion - charity - held in contempt
- Jews - trained by centuries of >>> - pursued - further
  - low - charity - brotherhood - peace - >>>/11 - >>> -
  - aphan -
- Antiochus determined to stamp out this challenge by anti-
  - pagan - revol. way / life & thought - subjugate
  - in sea, weather down - (Prohibit Judaism)
- His attack was: not ~~Samuel's~~ / Metabol. Spiritual attack
  - uproot ideas - 100 pages - all comments
- Invasion & defiled Temple - desecrated altars - set up
  - images of pagan gods
- Maccabees raised standard / revolt - To preserve their
  - faith & their light - Few weak Ten in the end weak few in the end
- Returned to Temple - cleansed it - redecorated it
- 11) Crisis - Nature / light - It grows
  - all light - 1-2-3 light
  - one little light can banish a great deal of darkness
  - and when one light goes out - it only reveals another burning
  - True light shines on us Rejoice, you who hated those who (Jews)
  - Here is a light that is never dimmed - It is not this
  - little fire alone that was saved - nor is world's patriarchs



hunter to this little girl: Unto all light-bringers - (6

"And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness, the  
firmanent - and they that turn the many to righteousness  
as the stars for ever & ever -

12/ Recently I read a book written on the life of another  
great ~~leader~~ <sup>man</sup> Dr. Joseph Goldberger - <sup>congressman</sup>  
Pelagou - significantly called "Trail to Light".  
Trail to Light! - That's it! all those who hear  
witness to the truth - who rise ways to man and  
teach him to man - the princes who go beyond -  
who push further away the hinder, darkness -  
who stand firm and flank in defense, their inner  
faith & conscience - there build for mankind the  
Trail to Light -

13/ <sup>the</sup> Trinity of Alexander Pope <sup>poet</sup> to Isaac Newton - may  
"Nature and nature's laws  
Lay hid in night;  
God said: let Newton be  
And all was light" -  
he said to all  
who know  
heaven in the  
world!

~~And to Emerson - poet~~

14/ What the Maec - who saved Jul - & Julius-Ar. Crassus  
prince?



that the freedom, the mind cannot be confined  
 that the visions, the soul cannot be extinguished  
 that the desires, the heart cannot be outlanded <sup>control the</sup>  
 that chains can shackled men only as long as they are severed  
 that man can set men free - they must free themselves  
 that man is his own dungeon - and his own escape -  
 that true light cannot be successfully dimmed -

- 15/ Before the Mascebes could rededicated the Temple  
 they had to rededicated themselves -  
 Having done so - it was only a question of time before  
 the enemy would be driven out - and the lights  
rekindled in the desecrated shrine -

- 16/ Our day - light & freedom - human rights - facts.  
 - Bentat forces - invading Temples -  
 - Mascebes



## Col Court

## Nobel Scientist Gets Girl's Thanks

STOCKHOLM, Dec. 10—(AP)—A middle-aged man and his small daughter arrived at the Grand Hotel last night and demanded to see Dr. Selman A. Waksman, winner of the 1952 Nobel Prize in medicine.

He was refused at first but persisted and was finally received. With the little girl, he walked up to Dr. Waksman, and said:

"This is my daughter Eva. Five years ago she was stricken by meningitis, and the doctors had already given up hope when the news of your discovery of streptomycin reached us. The drug was rushed to the hospital and saved her life.

"At a time when so much time, money and effort are spent on devices to kill people, we would like to pay our tribute and express our gratitude to a great scientist who works to save human lives."

The little girl handed Dr. Waksman a bouquet of five red carnations—one for each year she has lived so far as a result of his discovery of streptomycin.

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4221 Pearl Rd. (at Memphis)

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