



## 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  
164

Box  
59

Folder  
896

What do you wish out of life?, 1953.

818  
WHAT DO YOU WISH OUT OF LIFE?

March 22, 1953

What do you wish to get out of life? Well, most people don't know. And those who do know, in all probability, will not wish to acknowledge it to their friends. An honest answer to this question would be: "Everything that is good for me - that is what I wish to get out of life - everything that is good for me." But it's when you start analyzing and itemizing and defining just what you mean by "what is good for me" - it's then that you run into difficulties.

Does one really know what is good for him? How often have men been shocked on realizing that the things they wished for and prayed for and got were really not the things they wanted. How often have men realized that the things which they purchased with their heart's blood were really not worth the price they paid, and how often do we realize that the stone which the builder rejected becomes the chief cornerstone of our lives?

What do you wish to get out of life? Well, if you asked a Buddhist, for example, a follower of the faith Buddha - and there are hundreds of millions of such people in the world today - if you asked him that question, what do you wish to get out of life, he is likely to answer you: "The only thing I wish to get out of life is to get out of life!" Life can offer me nothing that is good for me. Life is all evil, no possibility of happiness in this life. Life means suffering, and the source of all suffering is human desire and human cravings. The way of escape from suffering is simply to stamp out all human desires and all human cravings, to cut down - as the Buddha put it - the whole forest of desires and to cease to be and to free one's self from the coils of existence and from the chain of causation and the total disintegration of self and personality - that is the true goal, that is the consummation of life. That's the answer you would get from a faithful Buddhist. He wants nothing out of life - he wants to get out of it.



If you ask an Epicurean, a hedonist - there are millions of such people in the world although they don't belong to any special sect or creed or church, especially those who don't belong to a church at all but belong to this group of Epicureans, of hedonists in the world - if you ask such a person: "What do you wish to get out of life?", he will say, "Maximum of happiness." The satisfaction of all physical appetites and all the pleasures of the mind. These people have great appetites, unlike the Buddhists, for life. They are very voracious.

Koheleth of the Bible, Ecclesiastes of the Bible, was something of such an Epicurean. Koheleth applied himself to more wisdom, all the wisdom he could know, but also madness and folly. He made great works, he built great houses, he planted vineyards, he acquired many slaves and many herds and flocks, much silver and gold, and the treasure of Kings, and many singers and concubines - whatever his eyes desired he did not keep from them. He was able to get everything that he wished out of life, but strangely enough, when he came to sort of strike a balance of his life, he wrote down in his own words: "Then I considered all that my hands had done, and the toil I had in doing it - and behold, all is Vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun."

Lo and behold - here is this gay Epicurean, this exquisite hedonist and Sybarite - he ends up by becoming a cynic and a pessimist. He got what he wanted out of life, but found that he didn't want it after all! Perhaps Koheleth had overeaten of the fruit of the tree of life and of the tree of knowledge, the pleasures of the world, had overeaten and had spoiled his stomach and ruined his disposition. There were no longer any unsatisfied and unappeased hungers in his life, especially of the spiritual and the social kind, so that his life became stagnant and all things became, as he put, "full of weariness and despair."



There are those "whose greed is as wide as hell", to use an expression of the prophet Habakuk - "whose greed is as wide as Sheol and like death, they never have enough". There are many such people, but who live all their lives, in spite of the many things which they have, in want of any real satisfaction, and like the Ancient Mariner, they find themselves in the midst of a sea where there is "water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink".

But to the average person who does not believe with the Buddhist that the meaning of life is in annihilation - to the average man whose desires are not as wide as Sheol and who is not convinced that life is all vanity, "walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more; it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing..." The average man does not believe these things. What does he wish to get out of life?

Well, if he is a deeply religious man, a deeply pious man, steeped in faith and of confident trust in God, he will reply to the question, as the Psalmist replied: "All I want of life is the nearness of God." That is his supreme desire. "Better is a day in Thy courts than a thousand elsewhere." He may have little of material possessions; he may be poor; but he does not feel deprived. Those who seek God lack nothing. He is never really in want. "The Lord is My Shepherd. I shall not want." He may be in trouble, he may be in tribulation, he may be in the shadow of death. He fears no evil. "For Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff will comfort me." There is his complete fulfillment. He has everything because he has God.

There was a famous Chassidic leader, one of the greatest, Schner Zalman of Lodi, who in his great moments of ecstasy, of spiritual exaltation, would proclaim, "O God, I do not want your Paradise, I do not want your rewards in the hereafter. I do not want anything. All I want is you." Now, when this question is put to such a man, "What do you wish to get out of life," he probably will not understand it. He'd like to rephrase it. He would say, "How can I best serve God with my Life? How can I dwell in His presence for in His presence is fullness of joy." Now, it takes a mythic



to understand this, but it's a real experience.

But when you have reached such a high level of spiritual exaltation, discipline, you really no longer ask questions, because you have the answer, the complete and the sufficient answer. But most men and women do not reach such a high level of spiritual development, and in their reflective moments, they are likely to ask themselves - in fact, they should ask themselves, "What is it really that I wish to get out of life?" And this question, my friends, presupposes that you can do something about, that there is the possibility of getting what you wish, else the question would be altogether an idle one.

The truth of the matter is that you can get pretty close to your heart's desire if you wish for the right things - that is, the things which are within the range of your powers and which can be had by the mind, by the heart of man, and by his efforts and exertions.

Of course, if you reach for the moon, you will be moon-struck. If you reach for the sun, like Icarus in Greek mythology, you are likely to have your wings burnt and you will be crushed down to the earth. Boundless ambitions consume a human being - there is no doubt about it - they burn him up, and overreaching will break the heart of a man. Furthermore, there are many people who really do not appreciate what they actually have and are always wishing for something which, if they had it, would really do them very little good.

"We look before and after and pine for what is not," wrote the poet Shelley. But we fail to see the things which we have, the things around us, which other men would regard themselves as most fortunate if they possessed them. We do not appreciate the things which life has given us, the fulfillment of our unspoken and unuttered wishes which have been granted to us as a gift of God.



I know men and women - I am sure you do - many of them, who enjoy good health, who have a home, someone who loves them and who have interesting work to do, and are yet so restive, so tense and fretful in the pursuit of ever-receding goals, consumed with ambitions for more wealth and for higher positions, greater power, or richer honors, or to get ahead of their competitors or their neighbors. They do not appreciate what they have. They are reaching out for that which, if they had, would add little to the sum total of their life's contentment.

Most of us have enough, if we had the wisdom to understand it - most of us have enough with which to build happiness, but we are out looking somehow for some rare and costly building material which are really not required for the building, either for strength or for beauty.

There is a lovely poem written by the great American poet, Edwin Markham, which he called, "Earth is Enough". It applies very closely to what we are discussing at the moment;

We men of Earth have here the stuff  
Of Paradise - we have enough!  
We need no other stones to build  
The Temple of the Unfulfilled -  
No other ivory for the doors -  
No other marble for the floors -  
No other cedar for the beam  
and Dome of man's immortal dream.

Here on the paths of every day -  
Here on the common human way  
is all the stuff the gods would take  
to build a Heaven, to mold and make  
New Edens. Ours is the stuff sublime  
To build Eternity in Time!

Unfortunately, most people do not realize that earth is enough for Paradise. Most people do not realize that life is too brief and that we shall not pass this way again, and so they waste their precious days on what is altogether superfluous.



Here is what I believe a man should really wish for to get out of life, pray for it and work for it: A chance to build, a chance to grow, a chance to see, and a chance to know. It's really now a poem ~~as~~ it just happened to fall into that line. Maybe it will help you to remember: A chance to build and a chance to grow; a chance to see and a chance to know. The courage and the wisdom to make the most of the chance when it comes to us.

A chance to build in the world ~~in~~ something worth-while - it need not be monumental. Nobody knows what is monumental and what is not. A modest something, just so it is built with proud and honest craftsmanship, with good tools and with imagination - something you created, which is yours, which reflects you, which expresses you, which is you in manifestation. To build something that wasn't there before. Now, one who builds a home in love, in imagination and in integrity is a builder in the society of men. He has seized the chance, the opportunity, the privilege to build and he has builded it well.

One who builds character in children is an artist, and a privileged co-worker of God, and that is a wish that can be fulfilled, and its value is above all manner of reward - to take a young life and to mold and fashion it into something fine, beautiful, noble - what greater privilege, greater satisfaction can there come to a human being?

One who builds a worthy career - it need not be an heroic career - who knows what is heroic and what is not? Whatever contribution a man makes to the good society, be it the humblest, it is significant. To build a worthy career - that is inwardly one of the most rewarding experiences of human life. And this wish is within everyone's grasp, really.

My dear friends, our world is yet to be built! It is not a finished world. In a sense we are at the beginning of building the good society. There is so much of kindness and goodness and neighborliness and brotherhood and justice and peace to be



established in the world, which has yet to be constructed. And a worthy wish, a wish that one should ask for out of life is to be privileged to be numbered among the builders of the good society.

A chance to build, a chance to grow! A chance to try out your wings, a chance to flex all your muscles of mind and soul; not to die incomplete; not to die unfilled, with whole areas of your heart and mind unexplored. Life, my dear friends, is measured in growth, and finds its meaning in growth - always to stretch out your hand and your heart and your mind to higher levels and to higher reaches and to purer air, to distant horizons. To live the highest. Among the "Idyls of the King", Tennyson wrote a very beautiful one, "Guinevere" - Guinevere, the queen, the queen of King Arthur who had betrayed King Arthur, and after King Arthur leaves her, having pardoned her, goes on to his destiny and his death, she muses, reflects, and says:

Ah, my God,  
What might I not have made of Thy fair world,  
Had I but loved Thy highest creature here?  
It was my duty to have loved the highest;  
It surely was my profit, had I know;  
It would have been my pleasure, had I seen.  
We needs must love the highest when we see it.

Well, most men and most women do not. They do not reach for the maximum in themselves. Whatever in you can come to fruition, let it come. "Never leave growing till the life to come." Here is something to wish for - a chance to grow until our dying day - that is within the reach of all of us.

A chance to build and a chance to grow, a chance to see - as much of the world as possible, "for we shall not pass this way again". Some go through life with unseeing eyes and some travel to distant parts of the world with blind eyes and see nothing. They rush through the world hell-bent upon some kind of success, and they hardly have time to see this wonderful world and the glory of nature and the beauty of the world and the world of humanity. The Psalmist prayed, "Open my eyes, lest I



sleep the sleep of death." Most men and women, in life, sleep the sleep of death because their eyes are shut. A good wish, my dear friends, is that we may remove the dimness of our eyes. To see what God has spread before our eyes, to see the splendor of sea and sky and field and garden and the revolving seasons, and all the commonplace things of our world which are not commonplace at all.

Some of you may recall that beautiful play of Thornton Wilder, called "Our Town". Emily, in the play, dies and returns to life again to visit her accustomed scene. She soon prays <sup>to her mother</sup> to be allowed to go back to death; she can't go on among the living, and she says: "I can't. I can't go on. It goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another." She breaks down sobbing, and at a gesture from the stage manager, her mother disappears and Emily continues:

"I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed. Take me back - up the hill - to my grave. But first: Wait! One more look. Good-by, Good-by, world. Good-by, Grover's Corners... Mama and Papa. Good-by to clocks ticking...and Mama's sunflowers. And food and coffee. And new-ironed dresses and hot baths...and sleeping and waking up. Oh, earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you." And she looks towards the stage manager and asks abruptly, through her tears: "Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it? - every, every minute?" The stage manager says no. The saints and poets, maybe ~~they~~ they do some." And Emily says, "I'm ready to go back." She returns to her chair beside Mrs. Gibbs. "Mother Gibbs, I should have listened to you. Now I want to be quiet for a while. Oh, Mother Gibbs, I saw it all. I saw your garden."

"Did you, dear?"

"That's all human beings are! Just blind people."

To see with seeing eyes the familiar things - our families, for example - our neighbors, our friends, our community - to see human sorrow and suffering and struggle and sacrifice, and seeing, gain insight and sympathy and love, forgiveness - this is a noble wish within the reach of everyone. To build, to grow - a chance to see and a



chance to know, to gain knowledge, to mature in wisdom and understanding - here is where a man becomes most nearly divine.

The minds of genius have probed deep for us and have, in book, and in other ways unfolded for us, and made available to us, truth and information and insight - so many intellectual treasures, so many nuggets of truth, so much gold of the mind. And to wish, my dear friends, reverently and ardently - to wish to know, to know more, to understand, to understand more, not to die in ignorance of as much as I can possibly learn - that is a noble wish, within the reach of every human being.

Is that what you wish out of life? A chance to build, a chance to grow, a chance to see and a chance to know. Then a Good God will grant your wishes in a very ~~very~~ generous measure.

Do the things that are pleasing in the sight of God

and He will grant you the desires of your heart.





1) What Do you wish to get out of life?

Most people don't know!

Those who do know ~~will~~ in all probability <sup>will</sup> not wish to acknowledge it to their friends.

An honest answer would be: "Everything that is good for me"

But, it's when you start itemizing and defining what you mean by "what is good for me" - that you run into difficulties.

Does one really know what is good for him?

How often are we shocked or realizing that the things we prayed for - were really not the things we wanted.

The things we purchased with our heart's blood were really not worth the price we paid.

And the stone which the builders rejected - how often does it become the chief corner-stone in our lives?

2) If you asked a Buddhist - "What Do you wish to get out of life?" - he will answer - "only to get out of life!" - he can give me nothing



that is good for me. It is all evil - <sup>no possibility of happiness</sup> ~~no~~ <sup>means</sup> ~~no~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~no~~ <sup>new</sup>  
suffering. The source of this suffering is human  
desire. The way of escape from suffering is to stamp  
out all <sup>human</sup> desire, <sup>and</sup> <sup>nothing</sup> <sup>Expected</sup> <sup>nothing</sup> <sup>for</sup> <sup>no</sup> <sup>fight</sup>. <sup>Cut down the</sup> <sup>Whole Forest</sup>  
from all the <sup>and</sup> <sup>craving</sup> <sup>To cease to be - to free myself</sup>  
entanglements of <sup>the</sup> <sup>total</sup> <sup>disintegration</sup>  
self and personality - that is the true goal & summation

3). If you ask an Epicurean - a hedonist - <sup>What do you</sup> <sup>he</sup>  
will tell you - 'the maximum of happiness' - the satis-  
faction of all physical appetites and all the pleasures of  
the mind. He has a great appetite for life. <sup>He is</sup> <sup>voracious</sup>

⑥ Kohelet, the Bible was something of an Epicurean -  
He applied himself to know wisdom - but also madness  
and folly.

He made great works, he built houses, he planted vine-  
yards - he acquired many slaves - and many herds  
& and flocks - much silver and gold and the  
treasure of things, and many wives and concubines.  
Whatever his eyes desired - he did not keep from them.  
He <sup>was able to get</sup> ~~got~~ everything that he wished out of life - but  
strangely enough - ~~he~~ in carrying up a balance of his  
life, he writes:

"Then I considered all that my hands had done, and the  
toil I had in doing it - and behold all is vanity



and a strong after wind. — and there was nothing to be found<sup>(3)</sup>  
under the sun"

So, and behold, the gay Epicurean, the exquisite hedonist  
and Sybarite — ends up by becoming a cynic and a  
pessimist.

He got what he wanted out of life — and found that  
he didn't want it, after all!

Perhaps he had over eaten, <sup>from the tree, life of knowledge</sup> the pleasure of life, and  
spoiled his stomach, and ruined his disposing.  
There were no longer any unappeased hungers, especially  
of a spiritual and social nature, in his life —  
and so life had turned stayvant — and "all things  
became full of weariness" — and despair."

4) There are those "whose greed is as wide as Shetl,  
to use Hobbes's phrase, and "like both, <sup>they</sup> never have  
enough," <sup>but</sup> who ~~do~~ live in want of everything <sup>not satisfied</sup>  
and like the ancient mariners: ~~themselves~~ in the  
~~midst of~~ sea — where there is water, water everywhere and  
not a drop to drink" — for it all tastes salty.

4) But to the average person who does not believe that the  
meaning of life is in annihilation; whose desires are  
not as wide as Shetl, and who ~~does~~ not continue  
that life is all vanity — ~~and~~ "a walking shadow etc —



What does he wish to get out of life?

(4)

(a) If he is a deeply pious man, steeped in faith, and of confident trust in God. - he will reply: nothing - that is his supreme desire! - Better is a day in thy courts than a thousand elsewhere."

(b) ~~whether he has much or little~~ in life - he does not feel deprived.  
216 to 10000 let's be 31

(c) He is never really in want. 20000 let's be 31

(d) He may be in trouble - in tribulation - in the shadow of death - yet look at -

(e) He has everything because he has God!

(f) { it's all right } "God, I do not want your Paradise - Heaven - Rewards - help you!"

Such a man will rephrase the question <sup>of just this</sup> to read "How can I best serve God with my life?" - How can I dwell in His presence - for in His presence is fullness

of joy.

57. But when you have reached such a high level of spiritual discipline - you no longer ask questions as to how the answer - the complete and sufficient answer.

Most men & women do not reach such a high level and in their reflective moments do <sup>not</sup> ask "What do I wish to get out of life?"



The greatest presupposition <sup>is</sup> that you can do something about it - that there is the possibility of getting what you wish - also the freedom men altogether are <sup>not</sup> idle and <sup>passive</sup> <sup>heartless</sup>

The low thing the matter is that you reach <sup>close to your</sup> <sup>heart's desire</sup> works - if you wish for the right things - the things which are within the range of your powers - which can be had by the mind and heart of man.

If you reach for the moon - you will be man-destroyed.  
If you reach for the sun - both leaves you will have your wings burnt and you will be crushed to death.

Barbarian audacity consumes a man; - and over-reading

"Gibson's pride shall bring him loss"  
will break his heart

6/ Further more - there are many people who do not appreciate what they <sup>actually</sup> have - and wish for something which if they had ~~it~~ - would do them little good.

"We look before and after  
And pine for what is not" - Shelley  
But we fail to see the things we have, the things around us, which other men would regard themselves as most fortunate if they ~~lost~~ <sup>possessed</sup> them.

We do not appreciate the things which life has given us  
I know men <sup>who</sup> <sup>enjoy</sup> good health, have a home



and someone who loves them, and intending work to do - and yet are restless - these ofttimes in the pursuit of ever-receding goals - consumed with ambition for more wealth, a position, or power, or honor, or to get ahead of their competitors, or neighbors.

We have enough <sup>with which to build</sup> for happiness - but we are out looking for ~~very~~ <sup>costly</sup> building materials which ~~is~~ <sup>are</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>really not</sup> required for the building, either for strength or beauty.

The poet (Edwin Markham) - "Earth is enough" (1015)

7/ Life is very brief - and we shall not pass this way again. Why waste the precious days on what is superfluous, and ~~rather petty and unimportant~~.

8/ Here is what I believe a man should <sup>really</sup> ~~wish~~ to get out of life? - and pray for it - and work for it.

A Chance to build - A Chance to grow -  
A Chance to see - A Chance to know - <sup>big</sup> ~~other~~ <sup>chances</sup>

And the courage and the wisdom to make the most <sup>big</sup> ~~other~~ <sup>chances</sup>

9/ A Chance to build in the world - something worth while. It need not be monumental - a modest something - but with good tools and proud craftsmanship - and imagination - To build something that's wasn't there before.



One who builds a home in love, and imagination, and integrity?  
is a builder in the society of men -

One who builds character in children - is an artist  
and a privileged co-worker of God. - a role greatly  
to be desired - a wish that can be fulfilled -  
and its value is above all measure / rewards.

One who builds a worthy career - it need not be an  
heroic - whatever constitutes to the good society  
be it the humblest - ~~is~~ has been highly privileged  
and invariably highly rewarded. This wish is  
within everyone's reach! -

Our world is yet to be built - <sup>neighborhood</sup> kindness, <sup>solidness</sup> ~~solidness~~,  
brotherhood, justice, peace - are yet to be constructed

A worthy wish - is to be remembered among the builders.

10/ 6 Chance to Grow! <sup>(To flex all our muscles)</sup> To try out your wings.  
Not to die incomplete - unfulfilled - with whole  
areas of your heart and mind unexplored.

Life is measured in growth - and finds its meaning in  
it -

Always to stretch your hand and your heart + mind  
to higher levels - higher vision. <sup>To reach the highest</sup> ~~For ever~~

Whatever in you can come to fruition, let it

gwiner



come!

"never leave growing till the life to come" - Wendell  
There is something to wish for - ~~that~~ rather a chance  
to grow until our dying day - within our reach

11/ A chance to see as much, as much as possible.

"We shall not pass this way again!"

Some go thru life with unseeing eyes -  
They miss it - hell-bent upon success - hardly  
have time to see the wonderful world - the glory &  
nature - the beauty, the beauty - and the world of  
humanity -

"Open my eyes - but I sleep the sleep of death!"  
- Most men & women, in life, sleep the sleep of death -  
because their eyes are shut -

A good wish is that we ~~have~~ may remove the dimness  
of our eyes -

To see what God has spread before our eyes -

To see the splendor of sea and sky - and field  
and garden - and the reaching scenery - and

the common place things of our daily lives -

\* "Our Town" Thornton Wilder - Early - agitated  
which are not common place at all



To see <sup>with seeing eyes</sup> our families, really, and neighbors and friends - and (9)  
an community - and mercy + kindness  
about the and service

an environment -  
To see sorrow and suffering and human struggle, and, seeing  
this weight, and sympathy, and love and forgiveness,  
So that <sup>our</sup> lives rich enough always to grip each other <sup>that</sup> this  
This is a noble work - and within our reach.

11). A chance to know - to gain knowledge - to  
mature in wisdom and understanding.

Here is where man becomes most <sup>of</sup> nearly divine

— Minis of genius have probed deep for me  
and have, in books, unfolded for me, and made  
available to me - so much truth, information  
and insight - so many treasures -

To with, reverently, ardently. to know and  
understand - not to die in ignorance, as  
much as I can possibly learn - that is  
a noble wish - within reach -

12/ Is that what you wish out of life?

A chance to build - to grow  
to see - to know

Then a good fnd - will paint your wishes in  
in general manner - ~~just then I'd like to say~~



A Player

"Great God, I ask thee for no meaner self  
Than that I may not disappoint myself,  
That in my action, I may soar as high  
As I can now discern with this clear eye"

Henry Thoreau

That my weak hand may equal my firm faith,  
And my lips practice more than my tongue saith.

Ah, my God,  
What might I not have made of thy fair world,  
Had I but loved thy highest creature here?  
It was my duty to have loved the highest;  
It surely was my profit, had I known;  
It would have been my pleasure had I seen.  
We needs must love the highest when we see it.  
Tennyson - "Guinevere"

"Life's but a waking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more; it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing -"



## EARTH IS ENOUGH

We men of Earth have here the stuff  
Of Paradise - we have enough!  
We need no other stones to build  
The Temple of the Unfulfilled -  
No other ivory for the doors -  
No other marble for the floors -  
No other cedar for the beam  
And dome of man's immortal dream.

Here on the paths of every-day -  
Here on the common human way  
Is all the stuff the gods would take  
To build a Heaven, to mold and make  
New Edens. Ours the stuff sublime  
To build Eternity in time!

— Edwin Markham, 1852-1910



Sermon 818

WHAT DO YOU WISH OUT OF LIFE?

March 22, 1953

*14 out of 100*  
~~What do you wish to get out of life? Well, most people don't know. And those~~  
*what they wish to get out of life*  
~~who do know, in all probability, will not wish to acknowledge it to their friends.~~  
*Reg: An honest answer to this question would be: "Everything that is good for me, - that*  
*is what I wish to get out of life - everything that is good for me."* But ~~it's~~ when  
you start analyzing and itemizing and defining just what you mean by "what is good for  
me" - ~~it's~~ then ~~that~~ you run into difficulties.

*realization*  
Does one really know what is good for him? How often have men been shocked ~~on~~ *b, 12*  
~~realizing~~ that the things they wished ~~for~~ and prayed for and got were really not the  
things they wanted. How often have men realized that the things which they purchased  
with their heart's blood were really not worth the price they paid, ~~and~~ how often do  
we realize that the stone which the builder rejected <sup>has</sup> becomes the chief cornerstone of  
our lives?

What do you wish to get out of life? Well, if you asked a Buddhist, ~~for example,~~  
a follower of the faith ~~Buddha - and there are hundreds of millions of~~  
~~such people in the world today - if you asked him that question, what do you wish to~~  
~~get out of life, he is likely to answer you: "The only thing I wish to get out of~~  
~~life is to get out of life!"~~ Life can offer me nothing that is good for me. Life is ~~There~~  
~~all evil~~, no possibility of happiness in this life. Life means suffering, and the  
source of all suffering is human desire and human cravings. The way <sup>to</sup> of escape from  
suffering is simply to stamp out all human desires ~~and all human~~ cravings, to cut  
down - as the Buddha put it - the whole forest of desires and ~~to cease to be and to~~  
free one's self from the coils of existence, ~~and from the chain of causation, and the~~  
~~total disintegration of self and personality. That is the true goal, that is the con-~~  
~~summation of life.~~ That's the answer you would get from a faithful Buddhist. He wants  
nothing out of life - he wants to get out of it.



If you ask an Epicurean, a hedonist - there are millions of such people in the world although they don't belong to any special sect, ~~or~~ creed or church, ~~especially those who don't belong to a church at all but belong to this group of Epicureans, of hedonists in the world -~~ if you ask such a person: "What do you wish to get out of life?", he will say, "Maximum of happiness." The satisfaction of all physical appetites and all the pleasures of the mind. These people have great appetites, unlike the Buddhists, for life. They are very voracious.

Kohaleth <sup>is</sup> ~~of the Bible~~ <sup>Biblical book of</sup> Ecclesiastes ~~of the Bible~~, was something of ~~such~~ an Epicurean. ~~Kohaleth~~ <sup>He</sup> applied himself to ~~more~~ <sup>know</sup> wisdom, all the wisdom he could know, ~~but~~ <sup>and</sup> also madness and folly. He made great works, ~~he~~ built great houses, ~~he~~ planted vineyards, ~~he~~ acquired many slaves, ~~and~~ many herds and flocks, much silver and gold, and the treasure of Kings, ~~and~~ many singers and concubines - whatever his eyes desired he did not keep from them. He was able to get everything that he wished out of life, but strangely enough, when he came to ~~sort of~~ strike a balance of his life, he wrote down; ~~in his own words:~~ "Then I considered all that my hands had done, and the toil I had in doing it - and behold, all is Vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun."

Lo and behold, ~~- here is~~ this gay Epicurean, this exquisite hedonist and Sybarite - ~~he~~ ends up by becoming a cynic and a pessimist. He got what he wanted out of life, but found that he didn't want it after all! Perhaps Kohaleth had over-eaten of the fruit of the tree of life and of the tree of knowledge, ~~the~~ pleasures of the world, ~~had over-eaten~~ and had spoiled his stomach and ruined his disposition. There were no longer any unsatisfied and unappeased hungers in his life, especially of the spiritual and the social kind, so that his life became stagnant and all things became, as he <sup>put it</sup> ~~put~~, "full of weariness and despair."



There are those "whose greed ~~is as wide as hell~~", to use an expression of the prophet Habakuk - "whose greed is as wide as Sheol and like death, they never have enough". There are many such people, but who live all their lives, in spite of the many things which they have, in want of any real satisfaction, and like the Ancient Mariner, they find themselves in the midst of a sea where there is "water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink".

But ~~to~~ the average person who does not believe with the Buddhist that the meaning of life is <sup>to be found in it</sup> ~~in~~ annihilation, <sup>does not have</sup> ~~to~~ the average man whose desires <sup>which</sup> are not as wide as Sheol, ~~and who~~ is not convinced that life is all <sup>a</sup> ~~vanity~~, "walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more; it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing..." The average man does not believe these things. What does he wish to get out of life?

Well, if he is a deeply religious man, ~~a deeply pious man~~, steeped in faith and <sup>with</sup> ~~of~~ confident trust in God, he will reply to the question, as the Psalmist replied: "All I want of life is the nearness of God." That is his supreme desire. "Better is a day in Thy courts than a thousand elsewhere." He may have little of material possessions; he may be poor; but he does not feel deprived. ~~Those who seek God lack nothing. He is never really in want.~~ "The Lord is My Shepherd. I shall not want." He may be in trouble; he may be in tribulation; he may be in the shadow of death. He fears no evil. "For Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff will comfort me." <sup>That</sup> ~~There~~ is his complete fulfillment. He has everything because he <sup>has</sup> ~~had~~ God.

There was a famous Chassidic leader, ~~one of the greatest~~, Schner Zalman of Iodi, who in his great moments of ecstasy, of spiritual exaltation, would proclaim, "O God, I do not want your Paradise, I do not want your rewards in the hereafter. I do not want anything. All I want is you." Now, when <sup>the</sup> ~~this~~ question <sup>(is put to such a man,</sup> "What do you wish to get out of life," he probably will not understand it. He'd like to rephrase it. He would say, "How can I best serve God with my <sup>life</sup> ~~life~~? How can I dwell in His presence for in His presence is fullness of joy." <sup>But it may</sup> ~~Now, it takes a mystic~~



to understand this, but it's a real experience.

~~But~~ When you have reached such a high level of spiritual exaltation, discipline, you really no longer ask questions, because you have the ~~answer, the~~ complete and the sufficient answer. But most men and women do not reach such a high level of spiritual development, and in their reflective moments, they are likely to ask themselves - in fact, they should ask themselves, "What is it really that I wish to get out of life?" And this question, ~~my friends,~~ presupposes that ~~you can do something about,~~ that there is the possibility of getting what you wish, <sup>otherwise,</sup> ~~else~~ the question would be <sup>an</sup> altogether ~~an idle~~ one.

The truth of the matter is that you can get pretty close to your heart's desire if you wish for the right things - that is, <sup>for</sup> the things which are within the range of your powers and which can be <sup>attained</sup> ~~had~~ by the mind, ~~by the heart of man,~~ and by <sup>your</sup> his efforts and exertions.

Of course, if you reach for the moon, you will be moon-struck. If you reach for the sun, like Icarus in Greek mythology, you are likely to have your wings burnt and you will be <sup>fall</sup> ~~crushed~~ down to the earth. Boundless ambitions consume a human being, - ~~there is no doubt about it -~~ They burn him up, and overreaching will break the heart of a man. Furthermore, there are many people who really do not appreciate what they actually have and are always wishing for something which, if they had it, would really do them very little good.

"We look before and after and pine for what is not," wrote the poet Shelley. But we fail to see the things which we have, the things around us, which other men would regard themselves as most fortunate <sup>with</sup> <sup>to</sup> if they possessed them. ~~We do not appreciate the things which life has given us, the fulfillment of our unspoken and unuttered wishes which have been granted to us as a gift of God.~~



I know men and women - I am sure you do - many of them, who enjoy good health, who have a home, someone who loves them and who have interesting work to do, <sup>yet they</sup> and are yet so restive, so tense and fretful in the pursuit of ever-receding goals, consumed with ambitions for more wealth, and for higher positions, greater power, or richer honors, or to get ahead of their competitors or their neighbors. They do not appreciate what they have. They are reaching out for that which, if they had, <sup>it</sup> would add little to the sum total of their life's contentment.

Most of us have enough, if we had the wisdom to understand it - most of us have enough with which to build happiness. But we are out <sup>there</sup> looking somehow for some rare and costly building material, which are really not required for the building, either <sup>or</sup> for strength or for beauty.

There is a lovely poem written by the great American poet, Edwin Markham, which <sup>is</sup> he called, "Earth is Enough". It applies very closely to what we are discussing at the moment:

We men of Earth have here the stuff  
Of Paradise - we have enough!  
We need no other stones to build  
The Temple of the Unfulfilled -  
No other ivory for the doors -  
No other marble for the floors -  
No other cedar for the beam  
and Dome of man's immortal dream.

Here on the paths of every day -  
Here on the common human way  
is all the stuff the gods would take  
to build a Heaven, to mold and make  
New Edens. Ours is the stuff sublime  
To build Eternity in Time!

Unfortunately, most people do not realize that earth is enough for Paradise. Most people do not realize that life is too brief and that we shall not pass this way again, and so they waste their precious days on what is altogether superfluous.



Here is what I believe a man should really wish for to get out of life, pray for it and work for it: A chance to build, a chance to grow, a chance to see, and a chance to know. It's really ~~not~~ a poem. ~~It~~ It just happened to fall into that line. Maybe it will help you to remember: A chance to build and a chance to grow; a chance to see and a chance to know. The courage and the wisdom to make the most of the chance when it comes to us.

A chance to build in the world ~~is~~ something worth-while - it need not be monumental. Nobody knows what is monumental and what is not. A modest something, just so it is built with proud and honest craftsmanship, with good tools and ~~with~~ imagination, ~~\* something you created, which is yours,~~ which reflects you, which expresses you, which is you in manifestation. To build something that wasn't there before. ~~Now, One who builds a home in love, in imagination and in integrity is a builder in the society of men. He has seized the chance, the opportunity, the privilege to build and he has builded it well.~~

One who builds character in children is an artist, and a privileged co-worker of God, and ~~that~~ that is a wish that can be fulfilled, and its value is above all manner of reward, ~~to take a young life,~~ and to mold and fashion it into something fine, beautiful, noble - what greater privilege, greater satisfaction can there come to a human being?

One who builds a worthy career - it need not be an heroic career - who knows what is heroic and what is not? Whatever contribution a man makes to the good society, be it the <sup>most</sup> humblest, it is significant. To build a worthy career - that is inwardly one of the most rewarding experiences of human life. And this wish is <sup>really</sup> within everyone's grasp, ~~really~~.

~~My dear friends,~~ Our world is yet to be built! It is not a finished world. In a sense we are at the beginning of building the good society. There is so much of kindness and goodness and neighborliness and brotherhood and justice and peace to be



established in the world, ~~which has yet to be constructed~~. And a worthy wish, a wish that one should ask for out of life is to be privileged to be numbered among the builders of the good society.

A chance to build, a chance to grow! A chance to try out your wings, a chance to flex all your muscles of mind and soul; not to die incomplete; not to die unfulfilled, with whole areas of your heart and mind unexplored. Life, ~~my dear friends,~~ is measured in growth, and finds its meaning in growth - always to stretch out your hand and your heart and your mind to higher levels and to higher reaches ~~and~~ to purer air, to distant horizons. ~~To live the highest.~~ <sup>in his</sup> Among the "Idyls of the King", Tennyson wrote <sup>him</sup> a very beautiful <sup>one</sup>, "Guinevere" - Guinevere, the ~~queen~~, the queen of King Arthur who had betrayed ~~King Arthur~~ <sup>him</sup>, and after King Arthur ~~leaves her~~ <sup>reflects</sup>, having pardoned ~~her~~ <sup>you</sup>, goes on to his destiny and his death, ~~she muses,~~ <sup>he</sup> reflects, and says:

Ah, my God,  
What might I not have made of Thy fair world,  
Had I but loved Thy highest creature here?  
It was my duty to have loved the highest;  
It surely was my profit, had I know;  
It would have been my pleasure, had I seen.  
We needs must love the highest when we see it.

Well, most men and most women do not. They do not reach for the maximum in themselves. Whatever in you can come to fruition, let it come. "Never leave growing till the life to come." Here is something to wish for - a chance to grow until our dying day - that is within the reach of all of us.

A chance to build and a chance to grow, a chance to see - as much of the world as possible, "for we shall not pass this way again". Some go through life with unseeing eyes and some travel to distant parts of the world with ~~blind eyes~~ and see nothing. They rush through the world hell-bent upon some kind of success, and they hardly have time to see this wonderful world and the glory of nature and the beauty of the world and the world of humanity. The Psalmist prayed, "Open my eyes, lest I



sleep the sleep of death." Most men and women, in life, sleep the sleep of death because their eyes are shut. A good wish, ~~my dear friends~~, is that we may remove the dimness of our eyes. - to see what God has spread before our eyes, ~~to see~~ the splendor of sea and sky and field and garden and the revolving seasons, and all the commonplace things of our world which are not commonplace at all.

Some of you may recall that beautiful play of Thornton Wilder, called "Our Town". Emily, in the play, dies and returns to life again to visit her accustomed scene. She soon prays <sup>to her mother</sup> to be allowed to go back to death. <sup>Catharine</sup> She can't ~~go on~~ among the living, and she says: "I can't. I can't go on. It goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another." She breaks down sobbing, and at a gesture from the stage <sup>manager</sup> ~~manager~~, her mother disappears and Emily continues:

"I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed. Take me back - up the hill - to my grave. But first: Wait! One more look. Good-by, Good-by, world. Good-by, Grover's Corners... Mama and Papa. Good-by to clocks ticking...and Mama's sunflowers. And food and coffee. And new-ironed dresses and hot baths...and sleeping and waking up. Oh, earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you." And she looks towards the stage manager and asks abruptly, through her tears: "Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it? - every, every minute?" The stage manager says no. The saints and poets, maybe ~~they~~ they do some." And Emily says, "I'm ready to go back." She returns to her chair beside Mrs. Gibbs. "Mother Gibbs, I should have listened to you. Now I want to be quiet for a while. Oh, Mother Gibbs, I saw it all. I saw your garden."

"Did you, dear?"

"That's all human beings are! Just blind people."

To see with seeing eyes the familiar things - our families, for example - our neighbors, our friends, our community - to see human sorrow and suffering and struggle and sacrifice, and seeing, gain insight and sympathy and love, forgiveness - this is a noble wish within the reach of everyone. To build, to grow - a chance to see and a



chance to know, to gain knowledge, to mature in wisdom and understanding - here is where a man becomes most nearly divine. *For TL*

The minds of genius have probed deep for us and have, ~~in book, and in other ways~~ unfolded for us, and made available to us, ~~truth and information and insight~~ - so many intellectual treasures, so many nuggets of truth, so much gold of the mind. And to wish, ~~my dear friends~~, reverently and ardently - ~~to wish~~ to know, to know more, to understand, to understand more, not to die in ignorance of as much as I can possibly learn - that <sup>is</sup> is a noble wish, within the reach of every human being.

Is that what you wish out of life? A chance to build, a chance to grow, a chance to see and a chance to know. Then a Good God will grant your wishes in a very ~~generous~~ generous measure.

Do the things that are pleasing in the sight of God and He will grant you the desires of your heart.

*Verily, my friends, this is the way*



WHAT DO YOU WISH OUT OF LIFE?

Sermon - The Temple

March 22, 1953

An honest answer to the question "What do you wish out of life" - would be - "Everything that is good for me". But when <sup>we</sup> ~~you~~ start analyzing, itemizing and defining this phrase, <sup>we</sup> ~~you~~ run into difficulties.

Does one really know what is good for him? How often have men been shocked by the realization that the things they prayed for and got were really not the things they wanted? How often have men realized that the things which they purchased with their heart's blood were really not worth the price they paid? How often do we realize that the stone which the builder rejected has become the chief cornerstone of our lives?

What do you wish to get out of life? If you asked a Buddhist that question, he is likely to answer: "The only thing I wish to get out of life is - to get out of life!" Life can offer me nothing that is good for me. There is no possibility of happiness in this life. Life means suffering, and the source of all suffering is human desire and human cravings; to cut down - as the Buddha put it - the whole forest of desires and to free one's self from the coils of existence, from the chain of causation. That's the answer you would get from a faithful Buddhist. He wants nothing out of life - he wants to get out of it.

If you ask an Epicurean, a hedonist - there are millions of such people in the world although they do not belong to any special sect, creed or church - "What do you wish to get out of life?", he will say, "Maximum of happiness". The satisfaction of all physical appetites and all the pleasures of the mind. Unlike the Buddhists, these people have great appetites for life.



Kohaleth,

~~Koleth~~ in the Biblical Book of Ecclesiastes, was something of an Epicurean.

He applied himself to know wisdom, all the wisdom he could know, and also madness and folly. He made great works, built great houses, planted vineyards, acquired many slaves, many herds and flocks, much silver and gold, and the treasure of Kings, many singers and concubines - whatever his eyes desired he did not keep from them. He was able to get everything that he wished out of life, but strangely enough, when he came to strike a balance of his life, he wrote down: "Then I considered all that my hands had done, and the toil I had in doing it - and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun."

Lo and behold, this gay Epicurean, this exquisite hedonist and ~~Syba~~<sup>Syba</sup>rite, ends up by becoming a cynic and a pessimist. He got what he wanted out of life, but found that he didn't want it after all! Perhaps Kohaleth had overeaten of the fruit of the tree of life and of the tree of knowledge. The pleasures of the world had spoiled his stomach and ruined his disposition. There were no longer any unsatisfied and unappeased hungers in his life, especially of the spiritual and the social kind, so that his life became stagnant and all things became, as he put it, "full of weariness and despair."

There are those "whose greed" - to use an expression of the prophet Habakuk - "is as wide as Sheol and like death, they never have enough". There are many such people, ~~but~~ who live all their lives, in spite of the many things which they have, in want of any real satisfaction, ~~and~~ Like the Ancient Mariner, they find themselves in the midst of a sea where there is "water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink".



But the average person does not believe with the Buddhist that the meaning of life is to be found in its annihilation. <sup>It</sup> ~~The average man~~ does not have desires which are as wide as Sheol. He is not convinced that life is "a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more; ~~it is~~ a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing ..." The average man does not believe these things. What does he wish to get out of life?

Well, if he is a deeply religious man, steeped in faith and with confident trust in God, he will reply to the question, as the Psalmist replied: "All I want of life is the nearness of God." That is his supreme desire. "Better is a day in Thy courts than a thousand elsewhere." He may have little of material possessions; he may be poor; but he does not feel deprived. "The Lord is My Shepherd. I shall not want." He may be in trouble; he may be in tribulation; he may be in the shadow of death. He fears no evil. "For Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff will comfort me." That is his complete fulfillment. He has everything because he has God.

Schneur Zalman of <sup>Lodi</sup> ~~Lodi~~ There was a famous Chassidic leader, Schneur Zalman of <sup>Lodi</sup> ~~Lodi~~, who in his great moments of ~~ecstasy~~, of spiritual exaltation, would proclaim, "O God, I do not want your Paradise, I do not want your rewards in the hereafter. I do not want anything. All I want is you." Now when the question "What do you wish to get out of life" is put to such a man, he probably will not understand it. He'd like to rephrase it. He would say, "How can I best serve God with my life? How can I dwell in His presence for in His presence is fullness of joy." It may take a mystic to understand this, but it <sup>is</sup> a real experience. When you have reached such a high level of spiritual exaltation and discipline, you really no longer ask questions, because you have the complete and the sufficient answer. But most men and women do not reach <sup>this</sup> ~~such a high~~ level of



spiritual development, and in their reflective moments, they are likely to ask themselves - in fact, they should ask themselves, "What is it really that I wish to get out of life?" And this question presupposes that there is the possibility of getting what you wish. Otherwise, the question would be an altogether idle one.

The truth of the matter is that you can get pretty close to your heart's desire if you wish for the right things - that is, for things which are within the range of your powers and which can be attained by your efforts and exertions.

Of course, if you reach for the moon, you will be moon-struck. If you reach for the sun, like Icarus in Greek mythology, you are likely to have your wings burnt and you will fall to the earth. Boundless ambitions consume a human being. They burn him up, and overreaching will break the heart of a man. Furthermore, there are many people who really do not appreciate what they actually have and are always wishing for something which, if they had it, would really do them very little good.

"We look before and after and pine for what is not," wrote the poet Shelley. But we fail to see the things which we have, the things around us, which other men would regard themselves as most fortunate were they to possess them.

I know men and women who enjoy good health <sup>They</sup> ~~who~~ have a home, someone who loves them and ~~who have~~ interesting work to do. Yet they are so restive, so tense and fretful in the pursuit of ever-receding goals, consumed with ambitions for more wealth, for higher positions, greater power, richer honors. They do not appreciate what they have. They are reaching out for that which, if they had it, would add little to the sum total of their life's contentment.

Most of us have enough - if we had the wisdom to understand it - most of us have enough with which to build happiness. But we are out looking for rare and costly building materials which are really not required, either for the building or for strength or beauty.



A lovely poem written by the great American poet, Edwin Markham, is called "Earth is Enough". It applies very closely to what we are discussing at the moment:

We men of Earth have here the stuff  
of Paradise - we have enough!  
We need no other stones to build  
The Temple of the Unfulfilled -  
No other ivory for the doors -  
No other marble for the floors -  
No other cedar for the beam  
and Dome of man's immortal dream.

Here on the paths of every day -  
Here on the common human way  
is all the stuff the gods would take  
to build a Heaven, to mold and make  
New Edens. Our is the stuff sublime  
To build Eternity in Time!

Unfortunately, most people do not realize that earth is enough for Paradise. They do not realize that life is too brief and that we shall not pass this way again, and so they waste their previous days on what is altogether superfluous.

Here is what I believe a man should really wish for, pray for and work for: A chance to build, a chance to grow, a chance to see, and a chance to know. It is really not a poem. It just happened to fall into that line.

A chance to build in this world something worthwhile - it need not be monumental. Nobody knows what is monumental and what is not. A modest something, just so it is built with proud and honest craftsmanship, with good tools and imagination. Something you created, which reflects you, which expresses you, which is you in manifestation. To build something that was not there before. One who builds a home in love, in imagination and integrity is a builder in



the society of men. He has seized the chance, the opportunity, the privilege to build and he has builded ~~it~~ well.

One who builds character in children is an artist, and a privileged co-worker of God. That is a wish that can be fulfilled, and its value is above all manner of reward. To take a young life; to mold and fashion it into something fine, beautiful, noble - what greater privilege, greater satisfaction can there come to a human being?

One who builds a worthy career - it need not be an heroic career - who knows what is heroic and what is not? Whatever contribution a man makes to the good society, be it the most humble, it is significant. To build a worthy career - that is inwardly one of the most rewarding experiences of human life. And this wish is really within everyone's grasp.

Our world is yet to be built! It is not a finished world. In a sense we are at the beginning of building the good society. There is so much of kindness and goodness and neighborliness and brotherhood and justice and peace to be established in the world. And a worthy wish, ~~a wish that one should ask for out of life~~ is to be privileged to be numbered among the builders of the good society.

A chance to build, a chance to grow! A chance to try out your wings, a chance to flex all your muscles of mind and soul; not to die incomplete; not to die unfulfilled, with whole areas of your heart and mind unexplored. Life, is measured in growth, and finds its meaning in growth - always to stretch out your hand and your heart and your mind to higher levels and to higher reaches, to purer air, to distant horizons. In his "Idylls of the King", Tennyson wrote some very beautiful lines, "~~Guinevere~~ Guinevere, the queen of King Arthur who had betrayed him, after King Arthur has gone to his death, reflects and says:



Ah, my God,  
What might I not have made of Thy fair world,  
Had I but loved Thy highest creature here?  
It was my duty to have loved the highest;  
It surely was my profit, had I known;  
It would have been my pleasure, had I seen.  
We needs must love the highest when we see it.

Well, most men and most women do not. They do not reach for the maximum in themselves. Whatever in you can come to fruition, let it come. "Never leave growing till the life to come." Here is something to wish for - a chance to grow until our dying day, that is within the reach of all of us.

A chance to build and a chance to grow, a chance to see as much of the world as possible, "for we shall <sup>not</sup> pass this way again". Some go through life with unseeing eyes and some travel to distant parts of the world and see nothing. They rush through the world hell-bent upon some kind of success, and they hardly have time to see this wonderful world and the glory of nature and the beauty of the world and the world of humanity. The Psalmist prayed, "Open my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death." Most men and women, in life, sleep the sleep of death because their eyes are shut. A good wish is that we may remove the dimness of our eyes - to see what God has spread before our eyes, the splendor of sea and sky and field and garden and the revolving seasons, and all the commonplace things of our world which are not commonplace at all.

Some of you may recall that beautiful play of Thornton Wilder, called "Our Town". Emily, in the play, dies and returns to life again to visit her accustomed scene. She soon prays to her mother to be allowed to go back to death. She can't continue among the living, and says: "I can't. I can't go on. It goes so fast. We don't have time to look at one another." She breaks down sobbing, and at a gesture from the stage manager, her mother disappears and Emily continues:



"I didn't realize. So all that was going on and we never noticed. Take me back - up the hill - to my grave. But first: wait! One more look. Good-by, Good-by, world. Good-by, Grover's Corners ... Mama and Papa. Good-by to clocks ticking ... and Mama's sunflowers. And food and coffee. And new-ironed dresses and hot baths ... and sleeping and waking up. Oh, earth, you're too wonderful for anybody to realize you." And she looks towards the stage manager and asks abruptly, through her tears: "Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it? - every, every minute?" The stage manager says no. The saints and poets, maybe - they do some." And Emily says, "I'm ready to go back." She returns to her chair beside Mrs. Gibbs. "Mother Gibbs, I should have listened to you. Now I want to be quiet for a while. Oh, Mother Gibbs, I saw it all. I saw your garden."

"Did you, dear?"

"That's all human beings are! Just blind people."

To see with seeing eyes the familiar things - our families, for example - our neighbors, our friends, our community - to see human sorrow and suffering and struggle and sacrifice, and seeing, gain insight and sympathy and love, forgiveness - this is a noble wish within the reach of everyone. To build, to grow - a chance to see and a chance to know; to gain knowledge, to mature in wisdom and understanding - here is where a man becomes most nearly divine. For the minds of genius have probed deep for us and have made available to us so many intellectual treasures, so many nuggets of truth, so much gold of the mind. And to wish reverently and ardently - to know, to know more, to understand, to understand more, not to die in ignorance of as much as I can possibly learn - that too is a noble wish, within the reach of every human being.

Is that what you wish out of life? A chance to build, a chance to grow, a chance to see and a chance to know. Then a good God will grant your wishes in a very generous measure. Do the things that are pleasing in the sight of God. Va'yimalah mishalet libecha - and He will grant you the desires of your heart.