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On being fair to yourself, 1953.

ON BEING FAIR TO YOURSELF

December 20, 1953

My dear friends, Many people need not be admonished to be fair to themselves. They are more than ~~fair~~ to themselves. They are all out for themselves. They are absorbed in themselves; they hardly see anybody else but themselves. They seem to think that the world revolves around themselves. They seem to think that the world exists only to serve them, enrich them, satisfy them. We call such people, because of their accent on themselves, selfish people. There are harder terms which are occasionally applied to them. As a rule these people have rather thick skins and are impervious to criticism or to the unfavorable opinion which their fellow-men have of them. What is even worse, such is their make-up, that they are actually unaware of their short-comings and of their unpopularity.

Society, unfortunately, must tolerate such people, these self-centered and these self-pampering people. They cannot be punished by law, as frequently they are within the law. But society has no use for them or any regard for them. Because they are not of the material out of which a good society can be built. They do not know, or knowing, ignore the fact that there is need for a ready and willing cooperation between men in order to build that good society - even a small unit of that society - the family - no society can exist without a social sense of responsibility, of mutual give and take, of sharing of responsibilities and burdens as well as of privileges. These selfish people are always ready to take but are seldom willing to give, in terms of service or of substance or of devotion or of sacrifice.

In a real sense it is these people who should be admonished about being fair to themselves, for of course they are not fair to themselves. They think they are. They fail to realize that they are failures in those very areas of life where they want to succeed. They impersonal happiness and in the respect of their fellow men and in their social security - these people as a rule are unhappy, they are not respected, and they are regarded as sort of social castaways by the other

members of their group.

I'm not thinking this morning of these people - those who are not fair to themselves because they are selfish. I am thinking of other people, who are not fair to themselves not because they are selfish, but because they are either thoughtless or improvident or lacking in prudence or over-generous to the point of being imposed upon and exploited, ^{either} by family or by friends or by other members of the society. These people, however nobly motivated, are not really contributing to the well-being of society, for a good society is not made up of people who are exploited, one way or another. A man should look after himself first. A man should endeavor to satisfy the legitimate need of his life, and these needs, as we shall see in a moment, are not necessarily or exclusively material needs or selfish needs. They are the indispensable needs of human life which are not socially harmful. It is to these needs that a human being ought to apply himself first and foremost. His own basic, essentially human needs.

It was a very wise man, perhaps the wisest of all the rabbis of the Talmud, the great Hillel, who said, " ,"

"If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" Now Hillel was certainly not a selfish man. He is the man, you will recall, who is the father of the golden rule. When asked once by a would-be proselyte to Judaism to teach him the whole Torah, the whole ~~law~~, the whole of Judaism, while standing on one foot, quickly, he said to him, "Yes, I could teach you the whole Torah in one brief sentence.

(Hebrew) . "Love thy neighbor as thyself." This is the whole Law. The rest is commentary, though in study. This is the core. This is the summary, the whole Torah. So that Hillel was not a selfish man, self-centered in himself, and when he said "If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" he was thinking of something quite un-selfish. Hillel is known as the gentle Hillel. He came from Babylonia as a young boy, and he was terribly poor, so poor that he didn't have the pittance, the coin to pay in order to be admitted to the school to receive instruction in the Torah. The legend has it that one cold day

he climbed to the flat roof of the school and there, through an opening, listened so attentively to the instruction that was being given below that the snow covered him and he was rescued when he was almost perishing from the cold. Hillel had in mind on the basis of his hard experiences to reach the position which he finally reached, to be the head of the Sanhedrin, the foremost spiritual leader of his day, and the greatest among the *(Hebrews)*, the teachers of the Mishneh. Hillel had in mind the fact that if he weren't for himself, nobody would have been for him. If he himself did not strive and struggle and persist in the face of all hardships and difficulties, he never would have achieved the position or status which he came to achieve.

And so it was, this gentle, kindly Hillel who advised people to think of themselves. No one will help you if you do not help yourself. Even the most loving parents, your closest and dearest ones can only do so much for you and no more. They cannot study for you. They cannot train for you any more than they can eat or drink for you. You yourself must educate yourself. You yourself must build your own life with your own mind and your own heart and your own hands - the tools which are yours. Too many people are prone to relegate responsibility to others, the members of a family to lean upon others too much or to the community or to the country or to government. That is not being fair to yourself. If you are not for yourself, no one will be for you, in the long run. And then too in ^{to} pride in this advice to be fair yourself is also the admonition that you must defend the rights, stand up for your rights. Everyone has inalienable rights as a human being. In fact our whole democratic society is built on the concept that free men will want to defend what is theirs, their rights, and not permit others to trespass upon them, deprive them of them. Man should learn to defend his rights, not to permit himself to be trampled upon, to be used cynically and selfishly by other people, regardless of who these other people are. Each of us has a sovereign

personality. Each of us has a status and a dignity which others have no right to ignore. Parents have rights which children must learn to respect, and so have children. Parents are not fair to themselves if they permit irresponsible and undisciplined and demanding children to run their lives and by some subtle tyranny to deny them the peace and the decorum and the respect and the cooperation which are their due in their home. They're foolish if they do it. They are not fair to themselves or to their children.

Husband and wife are not fair to themselves and to each other if they trespass upon each other's life, if they do not hold inviolate the dignity and the self-esteem of each other. If through willfulness or domineering or chronic bad temper or these manifold forms of selfishness and exploitation they plague one another's lives and so frequently contribute to the disruption of a home. It is not fair. Friends should not permit themselves to be imposed upon by any parasitic friendship, by any clinging and absorbing friendship which contributes nothing to a give and take and satisfying comradeship but is only an excess of importunity. It isn't being fair to yourself. Those who would drain your life to feed theirs are not your friends, not those who love you. A man should be fair to himself. A man has only one life to lead, and that's a very short one. No man shall depreciate himself, no man should give himself over to self-pity or to self-contempt, no one should be guilty of any sense of wanting self-reliance or self-assurance or self-confidence. It is the duty of every human being on earth to try to soar as high as he can and to go as far as he can to reach as high as he can.

Man should be fair to himself. He should not be merely a stepping stone for others. But being fair to yourself of course means much more than protecting yourself against others. You have to protect yourself against yourself, too. One ought to ask himself, "Am I making the most of my life?" "Can I think of myself? Am I being fair to myself in terms of myself?"

My dear friends, when there isn't enough to go around, as for example in war time nations resort to rationing (we've experienced that in the last World War), a drastic organization or reorganization takes place of the customary way of living of a people in order to insure that that which is available will be put to the best and maximum use for the benefit of everybody. And so we have rationing. When there is abundance and you can have all the things you want, everybody can have all the things they want, there is no need for rationing, no one likes it particularly, but rationing is supreme wisdom when there isn't enough to go around in order to preserve life and to keep a society from total collapse.

This is true not only of rationing, it is true also of intelligent budgeting generally, even in peace time. The provident family budgets itself. It apportions its income or its foreseeable income in order to satisfy in the best possible way all the variety of needs of all the members of the family, putting first things first but striving as far as possible for a well-rounded way of life for everybody. And if the budget is limited, the family wisely denies itself luxuries in order to satisfy necessities of life. That's plain common sense. But the point I am trying to make is that if we as human beings wish to be fair to ourselves, we must think in terms of rationing our lives. The resources of our lives are not unlimited. Our days on earth are sharply limited. You cannot get more years than there are allotted to you. Just so many points, as it were, so many time points in the ration book of life and no more. And therefore we cannot afford to waste our time points, to waste our talents, to waste our opportunities and to squander our time on the unessential or to get our life out of balance into a desperate and unsatisfying bias, as it were. And in this instance there is no government other than ourselves to enforce such a rationing. We must do it ourselves, and to be fair to ourselves we must do it.

As far as the limitation of life is concerned, the Rabbi said, "At 20, men are

ambitious; at 30 they are at their full strength; at 40 they have reached a period of understanding; at 50 they are prepared to give counsel and advice to others; at 60 we start getting old; at 70 we are old; at 80 a man must be very strong indeed to be in full possession of all his faculties; at 90 we are bowed down to the grave; at 100 it is just as if we were dead." There is the rationing book. There it is. And as years go on the point values, so to speak, grow less and less as you see.

Now we all know that, when we stop to reflect, and yet we live and spend our days as if our days were inexhaustible, as if time were abundant and easily replenished, as if there were no need to budget, to plan for these fugitive years of ours, to select, to choose among what is available to determine what is important in order to achieve a satisfying and well-balanced life.

And another thing to keep in mind is that one cannot hoard life. During rationing days you may remember some people tried to hoard, store away, legally or illegally, certain commodities. Well you can, I suppose, hoard things, but you cannot hoard life. There is no way of doing it. That is why selfish people are such stupid people. They think that they are hoarding life when they are miserly given to self-aggrandizement. They think they are really hoarding the real treasures, the real values of life. Actually they're just hoarding things.

Now to be fair to yourself you must decide, sooner or later, what you want most out of life and for what you are prepared to pay the highest price, and what is next, and what is next to that, and so a balance in your life. How are you apportioning your time? Your energy? Your interests? Your loyalties? How often do you stop to ask yourself that question. How are you apportioning your time? How are you rationing your life? How much time should a man give to his work? If at the same time that man wants to develop himself, study, enrich himself culturally, to have time for play, for social contacts, for community service, for religion. Some people work too much. Some people play too much. Some people do society too much. I have yet to find people devoting too much time to religion,

but I suppose there are such people. There are people who busy themselves entirely too much in community service, which is a very good thing as far as the service itself is concerned. They devote too much time to helping others and not enough time helping themselves. A person who devotes all of his time helping others presupposes that he himself is already a perfect product and doesn't have to do anything to help himself. Nobody has yet reached that stage. It were better, if such people devoted much more of their time to self-cultivation, to solitude and meditation and growing inwardly, spiritually and intellectually. It is not good to have too much time for the world and too little time for yourself. There are those who are engaged too much in business. The Rabbi said that those who engage too much in business never grow wise. Of course you can't tell that to many businessmen, but the Rabbi said it a long time ago. What they had in mind was wisdom in relation to the totality of life. A man can be very wise in business, very keen, very brilliant. That does not make him a wise man as far as the completeness and the totality and the multitude relationships in which a human being stands to himself in society. All of his energies are absorbed in the pursuit of his business, of his livelihood, and he is spent as far as anything else is concerned. I know many people who fail to continue any serious study or reading or cultural pursuits once they leave school or college and enter professions or business. They stop growing. They are not fair to themselves. joy in life in growing, unfolding, coming to know more and understand more, become more sensitive to more facts of life. I know certain scholars and certain professional people who study too much, live isolated in a sort of an ivory tower of intellectual absorption. The Rabbis here too say that all study without work must in the end be futile and may lead to sin, the sin of arrogance and pride.

There are men and women who play too much. Play is good for relaxation, for refreshment. Man should not always be in a harness of one kind or another. But when one's life is one unbroken series of pleasure-seeking, of entertainment, lacking any serious purpose doing nothing significant, making no contribution to society

but pampering oneself - that kind of a life is a sort of a peppermint life, a rather wasted life, and sometimes I think that those who pursue pleasures so avidly are really desperate people who don't know where they're going, don't know what it's all about.

The wise man, in other words, to sum up what I've been saying, is the man who looks after the needs of himself in the fullest sense of the word - his body, his mind, his soul. He tries to satisfy all their legitimate needs and in so doing finds harmony and that measure of happiness which is possible for mortal man to find on earth.

Of course all this can't be done scientifically, and I haven't any gauge, any fixed, hard rule by which you can determine the proper budgeting and the proper rationing. But it can be done reasonably well by intelligent people if they set up their mind to do it.

This same Hillel, whom I quoted a moment ago, said ^{who} *(Hebrew)*
"If I am not for myself, who will be for me?" also said *(Hebrew)*
"If I am only for myself, what am I?" There is a balance. No man is an island unto himself. We live and fulfill ourselves in society and this social loyalty ^{essential} is an ingredient, an essential vitamin, in a well-balanced, wholesome life. If I am only for myself, what am I? Even if you do try to be in a true sense of the word fair to yourself, develop your mind and your body and your soul, even that is not enough. You must learn to integrate yourself harmoniously in the group, in the family, in the community, in the world in which you live and make your life more vital and more meaningful through social effort, common enterprise for common well-being. And so together, men who are fair to themselves and fair to others, these men will build the good society. Strong individuals, fully developed, harmoniously developed, insisting on their rights, fully conscious that a man's rights are meaningless unless other human beings enjoy similar rights, and that it is by one free man working with another free man, voluntarily, for the well being of both and of all, that a

good society comes to be built. If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am for myself only, what am I? And, and this is the third part of Hillel's great saying, "And if not now, When?" When are you going to start being fair to yourself? Next year? Five ~~years~~ years from today, ten years? When you have made your pile and accumulated all you want, then you will set about being fair to your mind and to your soul? You'll never have an opportunity, perhaps. You'll probably be too tired or spent by then, or perhaps you may not even be around. If not now, *(Hebrew)* . If not now, today, when?



1/ Many people need not be admonished to be Fair to themselves. They are more fair. They are all-out for themselves. They are absorbed in ess - They hardly see anybody but ess - The world revolves around them - to It exists only to serve them - to service ess - to satisfy ess. They look out for ess - just last and all the time - We call them self-ish people. - There are harder frases which are used from time to time - but They have that sting and are as a rule inferior to criticism in the vast majority of their fellow-men.

Or, what is even worse, such is their make-up - that they are even unaware of their short-comings and their vapid popularity - just as a certain little animal is unaware of the defectory critic which its opposed presence produces.

2/ Society unfortunately must tolerate these self-centered and self banking people - they cannot be prevented by laws but it has no use or regard for them.

They are not the material out, which a good society is built. They do not know, a thorough ignorance the need for ready and willing cooperation without which no good society - or even the small unit, society which is the family - can exist.

They are ready to talk but unwilling to act - in service in substance, in devotion and in themselves.

3/ In a real sense, g-over, it is those people who should be admonished to be Fair to themselves -

For, g-over, they are not! - They think they are! - They fail in the very areas where they hope to succeed - Happiness - Rebirth

(4)

Wisdom - to preserve life and avert catastrophe.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVE

lines

lines:
The resources, our lines do not unlimited

Our days on earth are sharply limited -

Our days on earth are sharply limited -

- You cannot get him & glass there is also a
Just so many hoards - his figures in the water look like a man.

Just to ~~work~~ ^{work} ~~progs~~ ^{figures} ~~in the~~
We cannot afford to work as days, or as hours, or as

Apertures:-
Q. 4. Is any cover up put or ~~other~~ other than covers

To enforce this imperative rationing.

9/ At 20 - ambitious; 30 - full strength; 40 - understanding; 50 - ready to commit
60 - we start getting old; 70 - I am old; 80 - an aunt to many indeed
to be fully alive and in full possession of our faculties; 90 - bowed down by
the years and at 100 - 'it is just as if I were dead.'

10/ In years 90 on - point values grow less and less
Men know all that - and yet live as if - inexhaustible, - time abundant
and easily replenished - No need to budget - to plan their
proportion year - to select, to choose among all available
consequences what is most important.
To achieve a satisfactory and well-balanced life:

11/ We can grow hoard life - as some people tried to do with
communities during war-ravaged years -
You can hoard things - but not life - that is why ^{unwisely} people
are so stupid - They think they are hoarding life and
the real treasure - They are only hoarding things!

12/ To be fair to yourself - You must decide what you want
most out of life - ^{the things, the material things} and what you are prepared to pay for it?
And then, what next? And what next? - And so balance!
Always bear in mind that you cannot have everything - You
are living in a strictly-rational world -
How will you apply your time, your energy, interests, loyalty

13/ How much time shall you give to your work, if you wish to have time also for self-development, for study, for cultural pursuits, for rest, ^{for temporary rest} for play and for social contacts

Some are well too much - Play too much - Do society too much -
There may be those who wish too much time to
rely on - I haven't discovered many.

Selfish - I haven't discovered what
- those who buy themselves too much even in community
sense - helping others. It was better, if they didn't have
more time to self-cultivate - found as culturally - solitude -
moderation -
giveness

— All unbalanced ~~by~~ lines — Too many points as they
on on a another activity — however laudable

14/ Those who engage too much in business - never grow wise"

Too much of their creative energies absorbed - spent for almost
any thing else.

buy things else.
Seldom continued their serious reading or study, a cultural
pursuit ~~begin~~ which they began in school and college

15/ Professional men who "study" too much - isolated in work
 tower of intell. absorption -

all study without work must in the end be futile and may lead to ruin

16/ Play too much - unbroken series of pleasure-seeking - entertainment
 - lacking any serious purpose in life. - doing nothing significant
 - making no contribution to society

5 "paper mint" exercises

17). Was man finds the proper balance bet. all legit. interest and
restraint, life, bet Mind, Body & Soul - Feed your Mind, your Soul
- Satisfy mind, your Body
- That is the Fair to yourself

18). ~~Returning an affection to~~

18). It can't be done, 7 evening, scientifically. It can be done reasonably
well.

19). Hill - 100 pl. - 15/11, 11, 10/11, 1/11

No man is an island unto himself - All the planning, I shall
have to promise if you. We live lively over in body -
An essential ingredient, an essential vitamin, is an body
returning is an social loyalty - 10/11

Together, men who face to themselves to themselves - will build the
first society