



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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The woman of the year, 1955.



THE WOMAN OF THE YEAR

May 8, 1955

It is a lovely thing, dear friends, to have a Mother's Day once a year. It is a lovelier thing to have Mother's Day the year round, for Mother's Day is really a year-round day. It never ends! I can remember my own mother saying, time and again, "I don't ever seem to get done. I don't ever seem to get through." She had six of us to look after, and the day was never long enough. From early morning till late at night she was busy about her household and busy with us. She cooked, and washed, ironed, cleaned, she knitted, and darned, and mended, she saw us off to school, properly scrubbed, and was waiting for us when we returned from school, noisy and clamorous, with a cookie or a sweet for each of us. She saw to it that we did our homework quite properly. She taught us our manners, such as they were. She listened to our problems, our worries, and our rebellions, always interested, never ruffled. She counselled and chided and praised and encouraged, and finally when the long day of hers was over, she bedded us down for the night and recited our prayers with us. She was the mother of our day, and of our week, and of our month, and of our year. I can never recall her idling away a single hour. Only on quiet Sabbath afternoons she would sit in quiet repose in her Sabbath dress by the window, a Book of Psalms on her lap, and I suspect that her mind would then wander off occasionally from the sacred text to some far-away place from which, however, I am sure her children and their father were never long absent.

Mother's day never ended. And when we grew up and each of the children went his or her day to his own calling and his own destiny, she still remained with us, unintrusively but always a gracious presence who drew us and held us together and reminded us, by unspoken words, of duties and responsibilities. And when she died, in a good old age, busy unto the end, her children knew that her day with them would never end, for an unending day is a mother's day.



Now women do not work as hard today as they did a generation or two ago, fortunately, and they do have time, fortunately, for relaxation, for repose, and they can be very superb mothers, without the continuous labor of mothers of generations ago. For the test of a good mother is the test of the guidance and the counsel and the example which she gives her children. We all associate with mothers tenderness and love, and yet in a deeper sense, we should also associate with mothers strength and intelligence, for as you know, love is not enough. No single virtue is enough for the fullness of life and its manifold problems. The good mother is a mother not only of tenderness and love, but also of strength. She can give her children a sense of dependability and of security. She can say "no" when "no" is indicated, and she can make a strong affirmation when that is indicated. She is a woman of intelligence. She knows when to hold the reins a bit tighter and when to relax the reins a little more. She cooperates without dominating, and helps without taking over.

I frequently think of the women of the Bible, and there I find that among the qualities which the Bible ascribes to its outstanding women are invariably qualities of strength. The women of the Bible are not sheltered sort of people - helpless, feeble. They are strong, purposeful, they can plan, they can execute. "Strength and dignity are her clothing." The matriarchs of the Bible - Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah - are women of strength and competence. The mother of Moses knew how to defy the might of Egypt and how to contrive to save her child from death, and so insure a redeemer for Israel and for humanity. Deborah was a prophetess to whom the people of Israel came for judgment, and it was Deborah who summoned Barak and sent him forth to lead the men of Israel into battle against the Canaanites. Barak would not go without her. "If you will go with me, I will go. But if you will not go with me, I will not go." Deborah is called "the mother in Israel."

There is Rizpah, a tragic mother, whose sons, which she bore to King Saul, were hanged to atone for the blood guilt of the King who had sworn to save the Gibeonites



but actually put them to death. And now there was a dread famine in the land which was attributed to this gross sin which had to be expiated, and so the children of Rizpah paid the price for the sin of their father. And the Bible records "they were put to death in the first days of harvest, at the beginning of the barley harvest. And Rizpah, the mother, took sack cloth and spread it for herself on the rock from the beginning of the harvest season until rain fell upon them from the heavens; and she did not allow the birds of the air to come upon her children by day or the beasts of the field by night." What fierce strength is here and what deathless love and what tragic nobility.

And that nameless mother in the Bible - who rises to such sublimity in spite of her sinful profession - in the Judgment of King Solomon, when her living child is claimed by another woman and King Solomon was about to order that the living child be divided between the two women who claimed him, the false mother cried out, "It shall be neither mine nor yours, divided." But the true mother said to the King, because her heart yearned for her son, "O my Lord, give her this living child, but by no means slay it." To lose her child forever rather than see it die! To grieve for the rest of her life in loneliness and bereavement and to suffer all her life the pangs of an irreparable wrong - she preferred that for the love of her child.

The Bible is full of such mothers of strength, sacrificial strength: Hannah, who saw her seven children done to death when she would not persuade her children to kneel down and worship at the idols of King Antiochus; the wife of the great Rabbi Akiba, Rachel, born to affluence, beautiful woman of a famous house in Jerusalem, who fell in love with this ignorant shepherd, Akiba, and resolved to marry him in spite of the wishes of her parents. For 24 years Rachel worked in order to make it possible for Akiba to study, and at the end of 24 years of the hardest labor and sacrifices, she married Akiba who became the foremost teacher of the generation. She was looked upon as an outcast all those years, but Rachel had strength, soul, and



unconquerable love and devotion. And Beruiah, another woman, a mother in Israel, daughter of a father who was martyred for his faith, Rabbi Hanama b. Teradion. She was the wife of the famous Rabbi Mayer. And one day when Rabbi Mayer was away at school teaching, his two sons were sun-struck and died. Beruiah took both of their children and put them on a couch in the bed chamber and waited for the return of her husband, and Rabbi Mayer came, and she said to him, "My dear husband, some time ago a stranger came by and deposited with me for safe-keeping two precious jewels. Today he came and claimed them. Should I return these jewels to him?" "My," said Rabbi Mayer, "of course, you must." And Beruiah took her husband by the hand and led him into the chamber where her two dead children lay, and she said to him, "The Lord hath given and the Lord hath taken away. Let us together say, 'Blessed be the name of the Lord.'"

What is precious, dear friends, in a mother's love is that it is not built upon our perfection. It is freely given in spite of our imperfections. When we no longer deserve it, it is still there, and that is man's utmost security in life. And when the world rejects us, that is still the place of refuge and the unfailing sanctuary. Our people was privileged to have two great sons during the last century, those of them foremost poets, one, the crowning poet - the crowning lyrical poet of Germany,

Heinrich Heine, whose crown rough hands from time to time wished to hurl into the dust, whose statue was frequently removed from its pedestal by those who hated Heine, not because he was a great poet but because he was a Jew. Heine led a tragic life; he was torn by conflicting passions and loyalties; he fought valiantly for human freedom ; he frequently wandered off into dark paths and by-ways where sorrow and tragedy overtook him. In the last seven years of his life, broken by a spinal disease, he spent in what he called his mattress grave, in the city of Paris. The mother of Heinrich Heine greatly influenced his life. She saw to his education. She sacrificed to make it possible. She sold her jewels and her necklace and her earrings in order to pay the tuition fee of her Heinrich. Heine had to flee Germany



and spend his life in exile, many years. But he always thought of his mother, wrote to her, shielded her from a knowledge of his true condition of health and spirit. His last utterance before he died was, "I shall no longer be able to write to my dear mother."

Heine, who had wandered so far away from his mother's teachings, had become lost in the labyrinths of life, seeking things which he never found, wrote a poem which he dedicated to his mother, who was the last security and the last refuge of his life:

In fond delusion once I left thy side;  
Unto the wide world's end I fain would fare,  
To see if I might find Love anywhere  
And lovingly embrace Love as a bride.

Love sought I in all paths, at every gate;  
Oft and again outstretching suppliant palms,  
I begged in vain of Love the slightest alms,  
But the world laughed and offered me cold hate.

Forever I aspired towards Love, forever  
Towards Love, and nevertheless I found Love never, -  
And sick at heart, homeward my steps did move.

And Lo! thou comest forth to welcome me;  
And that which in thy swimming eyes I see,  
That is the precious, the long-looked-for Love.

The translation is by Emma Lazarus.

There was another great poet of our people during the last one hundred years, the foremost Hebrew poet of our day and of many days, Bialik. Bialik was seven years old when his father died. His mother was left a widow with three children in the direst and the blackest poverty. Her struggle to support her three orphans remained with the poet Bialik the saddest memory of his life, and his poetry expresses time and again the bitter resentment at this wretched poverty, suffering, and want of his mother, but also of his deep love and adoration of her.

A friend of Bialik who knew his mother, describes her this way: "A poor, thin, dried up little woman with a pinched face and dim eyes, and all of her bespoke humility and modesty and suffering and sorrow and secret sadness, all of her - a symbol of



grieving widowhood and boundless love. But Bialik never forgot this poor, thin dried up little woman; he loved her with an unfathomable love, and in one of his great poems he writes, "And yet, by God, if one drop of thy tears fall on the earth from where'er it be - from all the depths,

Like a pearl from the bottom of the sea

Will I draw it up and polish it and set it as the choicest wreath

Which e'er did gleam for everlasting glory on a hero's brow."

Her tears became the pearls of his life. And he, too, wandered over the face of the world, seeking things which men frequently do not find, and he wrote a beautiful poem, dedicated also to his mother:

O come and take thou me  
Beneath thy wing, safe sheltered from all cares.  
Thy breast the refuge of my head shall be,  
The hiding place of my rejected prayers.

In twilight's hour of ruth,  
Bend down and hear the secret of my pain:  
They say that somewhere in the world is youth -  
Then where is mine? for I have sought in vain.

Hear yet again, I pray,  
Consumed is my soul with inward fire;  
And somewhere in the world is love, they say -  
What is this love, to which all hearts aspire?

The stars my gaze deceived.  
I had a dream, and now my dream has fled.  
I come with empty hands, of all bereaved,  
The last joy vanished and the last hope dead.

O come and take thou me  
Beneath thy wing, safe sheltered from all cares.  
Thy breast the refuge of my head shall be,  
The hiding place of my rejected prayers.

The translation of this beautiful poem is by Helena Frank.

Well clearly, dear friends, Heine's Mother's Day never ended for Heine, and Bialik's Mother's Day never ended for Bialik, for a true Mother's Day is never ended. And fortunate indeed are the men and the women who have been privileged to enjoy the day with a good mother, which extends from dawn to sunset, from the cradle to the grave. Every good mother is the "mother of the year," the mother of every year for every child of man.







She never seemed to get done - and she never died.

~~the life abides~~ For an unending day is No this day.

(a) need not work so hard - ~~God's - eternal - eternal~~

24. We all associate with mothers, tenderness and love. In a deeper sense, we, and quite ~~unconsciously~~ <sup>in the heart</sup> we ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> also strength and ~~intelligence~~ <sup>love</sup> is not enough! No single virtue is enough - there must ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> the character, the ~~work~~ <sup>work</sup>. This is how the Bible ~~thinks~~ <sup>thinks</sup> of the character, the ~~work~~ <sup>work</sup>.

~~the~~ 'Strength and dignity as her clothing' - <sup>2 L. 12 / 3371 / 516</sup> ~~strength and dignity~~ <sup>strength and dignity</sup>

- The Matriarch are women of strength - ~~confidence~~ <sup>confidence</sup> - ~~dignity~~ <sup>dignity</sup>

- The Mother of Moses - ~~defying the night~~ <sup>defying the night</sup> - ~~confesses~~ <sup>confesses</sup> to save her child from

death - and so wins a redeemer for Israel & themselves

Delilah - the prophetess - ~~saves~~ <sup>saves</sup> who ~~saved~~ <sup>saved</sup> Israel - to whom the people of Israel came for judgment -

Samson as Barak and sends him forth to lead the men of Israel into battle against the Canaanites. Barak will not go with out her. "If I go with you, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go." Delilah is

called <sup>for 12 pk</sup> -

Rizpah - the tragic mother - when sons, <sup>which she loved to her last</sup> ~~where~~ <sup>where</sup> ~~hanged~~ <sup>hanged</sup> to atone for the blood guilt of Saul & his sons. He had sworn to spare the Gibeonites but slew them in a field - and hung them on a bare tree in the land - & the ~~sons~~ <sup>sons</sup> ~~after~~ <sup>after</sup> ~~looked~~ <sup>looked</sup> to the sun which had to be expiated.

"They were fast to death in the first days of harvest, at the beginning of barley harvest. And Rizpah took sackcloth, and spread it for herself on the rock - from the beginning of harvest until rain fell upon them from the heavens; and she did not allow the birds, the ~~air~~ <sup>air</sup> to come



upon them by day on the beach, the field by night." What price<sup>B</sup>  
 strength - what mother's loss - What tragic nobility are here!  
 And ~~there~~ that nameless mother - who rises to such nobility  
 in the "Judgment of Solomon" - when the living child,  
 the ~~claimed~~ <sup>claimed</sup> by two women - was to ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> cut in two:  
 then the woman ~~who~~ <sup>who</sup> was the true mother, the boy child said  
 to the King; "heaven her heart pained for her son" - "O, my lord,  
 seek for the living child, and by no means slay it!"  
 To lose the child forever - rather than so it die! To perish  
 in loneliness ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> bereavement - and suffer all her life, the  
 pang of an irreparable wrong - rather than for the love, the child!

~~The Rabbits~~  
 = Aynah - Hannah + 7 children - 7 brothers.  
 = Rabbi - Rachel - wife, Aliah -  
 = Bernab - daughter of Mary R. Hanania b. Terabon -  
 James.

3/. What is precious in mother's love is that it is not  
 based upon our perfection. It is freely given, and in spite  
 of our imperfection - and we can fall back upon it - even  
 when we no longer deserve it. - This is man's security  
 in life - A mother's unselfish love is a man's unfailing ~~savannah~~ <sup>savannah</sup>  
 And when the world rejects us, there is still that place of  
 refuge - that unfailing savannah - 12 Great Jewish poets  
 ① Heine - greatest lyric poet - whose life was little, storm -







Mother's Day with Bread - Mother's Day with Wine - ~~the~~ (5)  
never ended! for we are persons who are intended to have each other.  
It never ends - from dawn to sunset - from infancy to old age  
to the bride, the grave. This is mother's provident reward!  
Every soul there as the mother of you the year is the mother  
of the Year - of every man & woman, life.



THE WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Sermon, The Temple

May 8, 1955





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THE WOMAN OF THE YEAR

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Mother's day never ended. ~~And~~ <sup>way</sup> When we grew up and each of the children went his or her ~~day to his own calling and his own destiny,~~ she still remained with us, unobtrusively but always a gracious presence who drew us and held us together and reminded us, by unspoken words, of duties and responsibilities. ~~And~~ When she died, in a good old age, busy unto the end, her children knew that her day with them would never end, for an unending day is a mother's day.



## THE WOMAN OF THE YEAR

Sermon, The Temple  
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It is a lovely thing to have each year a Mother's Day. It is lovelier to have Mother's Day the year round, for Mother's Day is really a year-round day. It never ends! I can remember my own mother saying "I don't ever seem to get done. I don't ever seem to get through." She had six of us to look after, and the day was never long enough. From early morning till late at night she was busy about her household and busy with us. She cooked, and washed, ironed, cleaned, knitted, darned, and mended. She saw us off to school properly scrubbed, and was waiting with a cookie or a sweet when we returned from school, noisy and clamorous. She saw to it that we did our homework properly. She taught us our manners, such as they were. She listened to our problems, our worries, and our rebellions, always interested, never ruffled. She counselled and chided and praised and encouraged, and finally when her long day was over, she bedded us down for the night and recited our prayers with us. She was the mother of our day, of our week, of our month, and of our year. I can never recall her idling away a single hour. Only on quiet Sabbath afternoons she would sit in quiet repose in her Sabbath dress by the window, a Book of Psalms on her lap, and I suspect that her mind would wander off occasionally from the sacred text to some far-away place from which, however, I am sure her children and their father were never long absent.

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Women today do not work as hard as they did a generation or two ago. They do have time, fortunately, for relaxation, for repose; and they can be superb mothers, without the continuous labor of past generations. The test of a good mother is the test of the guidance and the counsel and the example which she gives her children. We all associate a mother with tenderness and love. Yet in a deeper sense, we associate her with strength and intelligence, for as you know, love is not enough. No single virtue is enough for the fullness of life and its manifold problems. The good mother is a mother not only of tenderness and love, but of strength. She can give her children a sense of dependability and of security. She can say "no" when "no" is indicated, and she can make a strong affirmation when that is indicated. She is a woman of intelligence. She knows when to hold the reins a bit tighter and when to relax them. She cooperates without dominating, and helps without taking over.

Among the qualities which the Bible ascribes to its outstanding women are invariably qualities of strength. The women of the Bible are not sheltered people--helpless, feeble. They are strong, purposeful, they can plan and can execute. "Strength and dignity are her clothing." The matriarchs of the Bible--Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, Leah--are women of strength and competence. The mother of Moses knew how to defy the might of Egypt and how to contrive to save her child from death, thereby insuring a redeemer for Israel and humanity. Deborah was a prophetess to whom the people of Israel came for judgement. It was Deborah who summoned Barak and sent him forth to lead the men of Israel into battle against the Canaanites. Barak would not go without her. "If you will go with me, I will go. But if you will not go with me, I will not go." Deborah is called "the mother in Israel."

There is Rizpah, a tragic mother, whose sons, whom she bore to King Saul, were hanged to atone for the blood guilt of the King who had sworn to save the Gibeonites.



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