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What is a Jew? The answer of the Maccabees, 1958.

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

THE TEMPLE

DECEMBER 7, 1958

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER

### WHAT IS A JEW? - - THE ANSWER OF THE MACCABEES

My dear friends, a heated debate has been going on in Israel - in the State of Israel on "What is a Jew" and "Who is a Jew"? A cabinet crisis has developed within the government over this question. Ministers have resigned and the issue has spilled over the borders of Israel into the lands of the diaspora.

At first glance it appears to be sort of an academic question, and one which asked rather late in the day - after thousands of years. And rather late to ask the question - "Who is a Jew?". One wonders why it is asked now and why such vehemance connected with is.

Actually, to Israel it is a very practical question, the answer to which has been made urgent since the establishment of the State ten years ago. In Israel it is a leading question. With the establishment of the State ten years ago, a law was enacted called "The Law of Return" - a law which permits every Jew from any part of the world to enter Israel and automatically to become a citizen of the State of Israel. A non-Jew may ask permission to come into Israel as he would have to in any other country in the world, and after a period of time - in a few years would have to apply for naturalization, the same as he would in any other country. But not so a Jew coming from the diaspora. He is admitted without question, and automatically he becomes a citizen if he desires to remain there.

In this declaration "The Law of Return", the term Jew is not defined.

And as you know, hundreds of thousands have come to Israel in the last ten years

from all parts of the world - the vast majority, of course, unquestionably Jews. On the other hand, there have been half-Jews and quarter-Jews who have come children of mixed marriages who are not raised as Jews. Non-Jewish women who had married Jews in the diaspora but who had never been converted. Now the "Law of Return" did not exclude any of them. But soon some problems began to develop for example, there was the case of a Monk in a Catholic Monastery who acquired \*sraeli citizenship under legislation which grants automatic citizenship to all Jewish immigrants. This monk was an apostate - he had been a Jew - and by default he got away with his claim that by converting to Catholicism he had switched only his religious affiliations but had not relinquished his Jewish nationality. He had belonged to the Monastery before the establishment of Israel in 1948 but was on the Arab side during the fierce Arab-Jewish battle for Jerusalem. When he wanted to return to the Israeli sector, after the armistice, he applied for an entry permit under the "law of the Return" which recognizes the right of every Jew to return to the Homeland. I am a Jew by nationality, he claimed. The Ministry of the Interior at the time regarded this attempt of an apostate to use a Jewish pass-key to get into Israel as rather an impertinent matter. But the Monk manifested traditional Jewish stiff-neckedness in pressing his claim - he threatened to bring suit in the Israeli High Court and his doggedness paid off. The Ministry had to climb down - the Ministry of the Interior - and grudgingly issued him the visa.

And there were quite a number of these cases - not of Monks of course, but similar cases which brought the question of the "Law of Return" into a focus whereby a clear definition had to be given as to who is a Jew.

And a more serious problem appeared here. As you know, the Rabbinic Court in Israel retains all authority in matters of marriage and divorce, and in all matters of personal status. This authority was vested in them by the British Mandatory government before the State of Israel was established, and the State of Israel has accepted this status.

These Rabbinic Courts follow, of course, Rabbinic law and tradition in rendering their decisions. Now, Rabbinic law does not recognize everyone as a Jew who simply declares himself to be a Jew. A Jew, according to Rabbinic law, is a person born of a Jewish mother - irrespective of the father's religion - or, of course, one who is born not a Jew who was formally converted to the Jewish religion according to the prescribed ceremony of conversion - and then, of course, his status is exactly like that of a born Jew. Thus, for purposes of marriage and divorce, and all other situations involving personal status, the Rabbinic Courts, which have exclusive control over these matters, will not recognize as Jews all whom the "Law of Return" has accepted as Jews.

And this situation came to a critical head during this year when the Ministry of the Interior - now under the leadership of one who is not a deeply religious Jew - and the Ministry of the Interior asked all citizens of the State of Israel to fill out cards of identity and to indicate what religion they belonged to - Jewish or Christian or Moslem. This was done largely for matters of security - this was a routine administrative questionnaire that was filled out. But is raised up a storm. For the Ministry stated that for the purposes of this registration it was sufficient for a man to declare in good faith that he is a Jew - and in the case of adults, that he does not belong to another religion, and that was accepted. And this latter condition - namely that he does not belong to another religion was only subsequently added by the cabinet. Originally, even that condition was not contained in the instructions for this registration. And in the case of children, if both parents concurred that the child is Jewish, he could be so registered. And this is clearly contrary to Rabbinic law. A child of a mixed marriage, whose mother is not Jewish, must undergo the rite of proselytization before he can be called a Jew.

Now because of the wide-scale protest which developed in Israel over this matter, and because of the dagger of a stragic rift in the Jewish community, the card of identity has been temporarily suspended, and the government is now consulting with religious leaders - both in Israel and in the diaspora as to how to handle the difficult problem and how to define, for the legal purposes of the State "Who is a Jew?".

I received an inquiry from the government of Israel a few days ago. It should be born in mind that the question asked concerns the religion of the citizen - it is not a question involving citizenship as such. A citizen of Israel is an Israeli and is not necessarily a Jew. He may be a Christian, he may be a Moselm, and he enjoys full and equal rights of citizenship in the State of Israel. There are close to 150,000 Mosems living as citizens in the State of Israel and some 45,000 Christians living as citizens in the State of Israel.

Except for the fact that the government has turned over to the Rabbinic Court all matters of personal status, as it turned over to Christian courts and Moslem courts in Israel all such questions applying to Moslems and Christians - except for this fact, which is not the case say here in the United States - except for the fact that a man cannot be married or be divorced in a Civil Court in Israel. And for this "Law of Return" to which I referred - which, by the way, applies only to Jews coming from the diaspora, the definintion of "Who is a Jew?" would not be within the province of the State - and it is for the spiritual leaders throughout the world to decide this question; it is a religious question. The government of Israel can define only "Who is an Israeli?" - just as the government of the United States can decide "Who is an American?" - not who is a Christian or who is a Jew. This belongs to the leaders of the respective religious communities.

Now, I believe that sooner or later the Parliament of Israel, the Keneset, may have to interpret the "Law of Return" a little more closely, because of these problems which have arisen - although it is doubtful in my mind whether it will be able ever or willing ever to give a full and concise definition of the term Jew.

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If it gives any definition at all, it will be, in my judgement, a very liberal and commensense view - not at all the rigid, traditional Rabbinic view upon which the religious authorities in Israel insist. And as far as leaving all matters of personal status to the Rabbinic Court, which has given rise to these serious problems, I for one see no other solution for it than permitting Civil Courts to act in matters of marriage and divorce which they do in the United States, for all such as do not wish to resort to Rabbinic Courts. This, I believe, will come in time, but only after a long and bitter conflict. A modern state cannot leave these basic questions of marriage and divorce to an ecclesiastical body.

But in Israel this is an urgent, legal question which they are trying to solve. But for the Jewish people throughout the world, "Who is a Jew?" cannot be defined by the law of the land. In fact it requires no definition. It is not a legal question at all. A Jew is one who accepts the Jewish religion - who feels himself a Jew - who throws in his lot with the Jewish people - who wants to be identified with the Jewish community and who wants his children to remain within the Jewish community. It is a voluntary acceptance of historic commitments. He who separates himself from the Jewish community by adopting another religion ceases to be a Jew.

Now the Maccabees faced - not a similar problem in their day, but a sort of a related problem. Their problem was not "Who is a Jew?", but who is a true Jew and a loyal Jew - because there were many Jews in their day born Jews, racially Jews against whom these Maccabees had to wage war because they were assimilated Jews - they were Hellenized Jews. They were Jews, although they had not adopted any other formal religion, were in every way immitating the ways of the pagans, accepting their standards, their inferior moral codes, fascinated by the surface glitter of the Hellenistic civilization. Jews who turned their backs upon the Jewish code of high and stern morality, of clean living, of compassion for the weak

and the needy, of reference for all life and all the exacting ethical teachings of the Torah. These Jews, nominally Jews, were destroying Judaism. And the Maccabees rose & waged zealous for the law/waged war not only upon the Syrian Greeks who ruled the country but upon the Jews within Palestine, who cooperated with these rulers. Jews who were prepared to abandon the holiest mandates of their faith at the behest of the ruling powers or to curry favor from them.

Tread you the story of the struggle of the Maccabees this morning from
"The Book of the Maccabees". The Maccabees were not satisfied just with Jews.

There were other peoples in the world just as there were Jews in the world. The
Maccabees felt that they possessed a mandate from the God of history to preserve
some great spiritual truce for mankind; that they and their fathers before them
had entered into an enduring covenant, to be an (Hebrewwords)
a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy people. They were unique in a heathen polytheistic
and idolatrous world with its low standards of morals and ethics. They were reaching
out for Jews who were prepared, as we read in the text this morning, to die for
their faith rather than to forsake it. That was their criterion - their test of
"Who is a Jew?". They were reaching out to the strong men who dared to stand alone,
to face great odds, who were not afraid to be few, just so they were on the side of
God - who were not afraid to be a small company, as we read in the text, fighting
against the great multitude.

That's a spiritual definition of the term Jew. Good Jews, my dear friends, are never concerned, are never worried about definintions. They ask themselves not "Who is a Jew?", but "How can I be a true Jew and a loyal Jew?" "What can I do to be a better Jew, to be more loyal to my heritage? What can I do to bring better \* service to my community and better Jewish education to my children? How can I make my life conform more closely to the ideals of the Torah? How can I help spread the light of brotherhood of justice and peace in the world which my prophets and the

Seers of my people first gave to mankind? How can I kindle more lightsin the world which is the sanctuary of God and where so many lights have been extinguished?"

That's the problem which the Maccabees set for themselves and that's the answer they gave. And that's the problem which the Jewish people in the entire world - inside of Israel and outside of Israel - face today, not a legal problem. Not to define a Jew in relation to a"Law of Return" or in relation to marriage and divorce, but how to be Jews in relation to their great historic destiny. And the Maccabees have told us how to be such loyal Jews. To date to stand alone - to be prepared to make sacrifices - not to be afraid because we are few in number - but to move forward with the help of God. To preserve the integrity of our spiritual heritage and to transmit it to the world. This is the meaning of Chanukah. Amen.





Kaddish

Friday Dec. 5

Sundan

### Those who passed away this week

PAULINE MILLER MINA LEVIN

Minna Levin

2st syllable

Vahrzeits

ERNESTINE BLUME DEGROOT

ANN FRANKEL
CHARLES A. STONE
HARRY C. KATZ
JEROME A. LEVY
CARRIE KOBLITZ KOHN
KARL FORCHHEIMER
JACK M. SHEPARD
SAM H. MEISTER
ABRAM KOVAL
JESS C. FISHMAN

HYMAN H.MANDELZWEIG LOUIS LITTMAN LOUIS K. SUGARMAN BERNARD FIELDS

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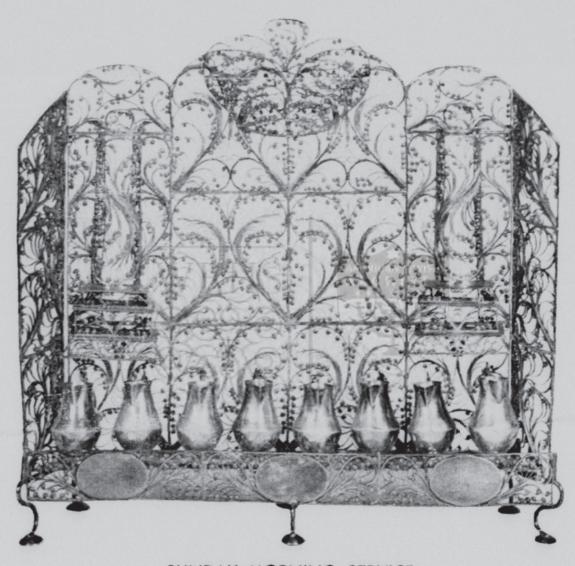
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# THE TEMPLE

CLEVELAND, OHIO December 7, 1958 Vol. XLV No. 9

Chanukah



Greetings

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

December 7, 1958

10:30 A.M.

# RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER

will speak on

# WHAT IS A JEW?-

The answer of the Maccabees

A special Chanukah musical program has been prepared by the Choir. It will feature the Judas Maccabaeus Oratorio of Handel. Miss Wischmeyer, Mrs. Strasser, Mr. Humphrey and Mr. Hakola will be the featured soloists.

# The Temple

Rabbis: Abba Hillel Silver

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER
Associate Rabbi
Director of Religious Education

HERBERT H. ROSE Assistant Rabbi

Staff:

MILDRED B. EISENBERG
Ass't. Director of Religious Education

LEO S. BAMBERGER Executive Secretary

MIRIAM LEIKIND Librarian

A. R. WILLARD Organist and Choir Director

A. M. LUNTZPres	ident
LEO W. NEUMARK Vice-Pres	sident
ELI GOLDSTON	sident
MAX EISNERTrea	surer
EDWARD D. FRIEDMAN Associate Trea	surer

### CHANUKAH CANDLES

Chanukah candles were distributed to the children of The Temple Religious School on Saturday, November 29th and Sunday, November 30th. This gift is made possible through the generosity of the Sophie Auerbach Scholarship Fund under the Chairmanship of Mrs. Carol Levison.

A beautiful brass Menorah will again be given by The Temple Men's Club to each newly enrolled child in the School.

### ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers which will grace the altar on Sunday morning, December 7th, are contributed in memory of Ann Frankel, by her husband, Al E. Frankel, and children, Mrs. Eleanor Skall and Morton Frankel.

# In Memoriam

The Temple notes will deep sorrow the passing of

R. C. NORBERG MILTON D. MARNITZ

and extends heartfelt sympathy to the members of their bereaved families.

# OF WAR AND PEACE-FROM THE RABBIS' DESK

December 7 is a date few Americans will forget. Seventeen years ago on this date a war began. It was a bloody war. That war touched every American home. The twenty-three names inscribed on our Chapel windows serve as a constant reminder of the cost of victory.

December 7 is a date few Americans will forget. Yet in large measure we have forgotten the pain and the anguish and the purpose of that war. Our one-time enemies are now our sometimes allies. Our one time ally is now our cold war enemy. The ideals for which we battled have been only partially realized in peace.

War ought to be forgotten. The word "war" ought to be obliterated from the human vocabulary. War represents the ultimate man-made evil. Man quickly forgets pain, so it is altogether human that we have effaced the remembrance of those difficult days.

December 7th we will celebrate the Festival of Chanukah. Chanukah too commemorates a war—the struggle of the Maccabees for freedom of religious expression. The Maccabean war was a bloody conflict. The price of victory was high. The Maccabean war too has largely been forgotten. We have pushed aside all thought of the pain, the anguish and the purpose of that war. Chan ukah today is in the main a celebration for our children. The suffering of the Maccabean guerrilla has been replaced by the singing of dreydl songs.

We ought to sing of peace. We ought to forget war. We ought never to forget, however, that the price of lasting peace is a continuing dedication to the ideals of justice and freedom. Peace will not last if it is simply the absence of war. Peace will last only when men of ideals and conviction present themselves for the service of mankind.

We sing today the songs of peace. I pray that we may never again have to endure the pain of war.

Daniel Jeremy Silver

MR. AND MRS. CLUB

ADULT STUDY GROUP

Friday, December 12, 1958

8:30 P.M.

Rabbi Herbert H. Rose

will discuss

"ISLAM AND ITS IMPACT UPON JUDAISM"

At the home of:

Mr. and Mrs. Morton Krasner
19219 Scottsdale Boulevard

### ANNUAL CHANUKAH FESTIVAL



Wednesday, December 10, 1958

8:30 P.M.

Luntz Auditorium

### THE CLEVELAND CHAMBER PLAYERS

Conducted by and Featuring

ANSHEL BRUSILOW

Associate Concertmaster of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra

This young American violinist has been lauded by many leading conductors as "an artist of exceptional powers, qualified and destined for great achievements in the concert field." He has earned significant recognition for his gifts throughout the United States, making solo appearances with most of the leading symphonies.

While a career as concert virtuoso is Mr. Brusilow's principal goal, his secondary interest is the art of orchestral conducting. Each summer, for seven years, he has studied conducting with Pierre Monteux, conductor of the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra.

Refreshments and Social Hour Free to all members and their husbands, wives and guests.

#### PARENT TEACHER MEETING

Parents and teachers of the Religious School Elementary and Junior High Departments spent an evening together in The Temple on Wednesday, December 3rd. The evening started with a visit in the classrooms, where parents had the opportunity to meet their children's teachers and to learn about the work of the individual class. Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver then conducted a discussion of "Your Child in Your School". A class session demonstrated the unit method of teaching.

During the social hour which concluded the meeting, Chanukah decorations for the home were displayed, and their use was encouraged as a means of creating the joyous atmosphere of Chanukah in the home.

Mrs. Joel Garver, Co-Chairman of the Religious School Committee, was in charge of arrangements, assisted by Mrs. Robert Smith and Mrs. Thomas Felber, Refreshments; and Mrs. Austin Klein and Mrs. Morton Reese, Chan ukah Sales. The Room Mothers, under the direction of Mrs. Allen Friedman and Mrs. Norman Copeland for the Elementary Department and Mrs. Irving Lieberman and Mrs. Bernard Rubin for the Junior High, acted as hostesses.

# CHANUKAH IN THE RELIGIOUS SCHOOL

The Temple Religious School will celebrate the Chanukah Festival on Saturday, December 6th and Sunday, December 7th, Classrooms will be decorated. Refreshments will be served. A special Chanukah playlet has been written and produced by Mr. Jonas Deutsch, Assisting Mr. Deutsch have been the members of the Choir, Dramatic and Dance Clubs, led by Mr. Saul Henkin, Mrs. Jessie Weiskopf and Mrs. lerome Fine, Music; Mrs. Sol Papurt, Dramatics; Mrs. Max Lazar, Choreography; and Mr. Max Gladstone, Mr. Gerald Kerner and Mr. Stanley Kram er, lighting and stage sets.

On Sunday morning parties will be held in the classrooms. These parties will be sponsored by the Religious School Committee under the direction of Mrs. Robert Frankel, Mrs. Morton Golder and Mrs. Milton Schulman.

### CHANUKAH BOOKLET

Booklets discussing the origin and development of Chanukah are now being distributed to The Temple membership by the Mr. and Mrs. Club. The booklet was written and arranged by the Special Projects Committee of the Mr. and Mrs. Club, under the Chair manship of Harold and Marilyn Schobel. Donald and Sharon Kumin are Vice-chairmen.

In addition to the history and cere monies associated with this joyous holiday, the booklet includes games, activities, names of records and books, and even recipes, to make Chanukah more enjoyable. It also contains a condensed version of a Chanukah tale for young boys and girls written and illustrated by Mr. and Mrs. Clubber Sharon Ross Kumin.

It is hoped that this booklet will make your Chanukah holiday a more rewarding and joyous experience.

Published weekly except during the summer vacation.

CLEVELAUD 6, OHIO

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THE TEMPLE

Ahe Temple Bulletin

Second Class mail privileges authorized at Cleveland, Ohio

### DATES TO REMEMBER

Saturday, December 6

and — Religious School Chanukah Observance

Sunday, December 7

Sunday, December 7 - Sunday Morning Services

Monday, December 8 - Adult Hebrew Classes

Tuesday, December 9 - Temple Women's Association Tuesday Sewing

Wednesday, December 10 - Temple Men's Club - Temple Women's Association Chanukah Musical

Friday, December 12 - Mr. and Mrs. Club Adult Study Group

Sunday, December 14 — Sunday Morning Services
Temple High School Chanukah Dance

THE TEMPLE LIBRARY is open Tuesday through Friday 9:00 A.M. to 5:30 P.M., Saturday and Sunday 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon.

THE TEMPLE MUSEUM will be open at the close of Sunday morning services in addition to all occasions of organization meetings. Arrangements to view the Museum by special appointment may be made through The Temple Office.

THE ISRAELI GIFT SHOP is open during all Tuesday Sewing sessions. Selections may be made at all times from the display case in the Ansel Road Lobby.

The Chanukah Lamp pictured on the front page is one of The Temple Museum acquisitions. It is of silver filigree, Galician in origin, about 18th century. It was formerly housed in the Museum of Frankfurt a Main and was acquired by The Temple Museum through the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc., an organization set up for the purpose of reclaiming the many Jewish ritual objects and books confiscated by the Nazis during World War II.