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How am I? What am I? Why am I?, 1959.

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

April 5, 1959

DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

THREE QUESTIONS EVERY MAN SHOULD ASK HIMSELF

WHO AM I? WHAT AM I? WHY AM I?

After I announced the subject of my forthcoming sermon last Sunday, I received in the mail a postcard. It read like this: "Dear Rabbi - you asked three questions. I give you the answers: Who am I? - Jacob Cohen - What am I? - a salesman - Why am I? - Oser, if I know!" Now, for an off-hand reply, <sup>- it is not at all bad. But</sup> these questions are really not off-hand questions or simple ones and were my correspondent inclined to give them a second thought, I feel that he would find that his <sup>simple</sup> answers are not quite adequate. There are many Jacob Cohens in the world, many John Smiths and tens of thousands ~~of~~ - hundreds of thousands, I suppose, of salesmen. - ~~and~~ <sup>How</sup> does my friend Jacob Cohen differ from them? Surely his name and his occupation, on reflection, do not completely identify him. A name is important, but our Rabbis already long ago stated that (in fact every man) has three names - the name which his father and mother give him at birth, the name by which other people called him - and that <sup>does</sup> not often correspondent to the name father and mother gave him - there <sup>are sharp</sup> ~~may be~~ discrepancies often times - and the name which he himself acquires.

When you are by yourself, you seldom think of your name. You are always aware of yourself - you seldom think of your name. When you write letters, of course, or sign checks, you append your name, but when you are thinking through a problem or making a decision, or planning a course of action, or when you are reacting to a situation of danger or fear, of love or hate, your name is <sup>hardly</sup> ~~hardly~~ not at all involved. It is yourself which is involved - <sup>you</sup> complete, essential human self.



And as such, as an essential human self - who are you? Who am I?  
Certainly not just I, not just my ego, for no one stands in the world ~~simply~~ <sup>simply</sup> in relation to himself alone. No one is an island unto himself. Every man from birth until death is an organic complex of relationship - sometimes increasing relationship, sometimes decreasing, sometimes shifting from one period of life to another, varying in scope and ~~varying~~ in intensity, but forever inextricable. Then, Who Am I? - I am that inalienable world of associations, of affinities. I am a very dependent and implicated being, implicated in many other lives - inextricably implicated in many lives, sometimes willingly and sometimes unwillingly. I am implicated in the lives of parents, of children, of family, of friends, of fellow-citizens, of those whom I employ or who employ me. And the manner in which I react <sup>to</sup> these multiple relationships - the manner in which I react, especially in moments ~~of~~ which are decisive, in critical moments - ~~it is this manner of my reactions to these relationships which~~ tell me and tell the world WHO I REALLY AM. That reaction ~~of myself~~ to these inextricable relationships of mine ~~that reaction~~ is my character. That is my distinctiveness! <sup>That</sup> ~~This~~ is how I really know myself, Even though I might succeed for a long time or a short time <sup>in</sup> ~~to~~ deceive <sup>us</sup> others about myself, I <sup>do</sup> ~~am~~ not deceiving <sup>&</sup> myself.

This is my true self - this is my true status - this is I. Some people when asked the question "Who Am I?" or when they ask themselves this question are inclined <sup>to</sup> ~~the~~ answer by saying "I am the son, or I am the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. So and So whom you surely must know, <sup>They were</sup> very distinguished people. I come from a fine family, a first family. I come from notable stock and ~~notable~~ ancestry. Well, that is all very fine but it isn't you - it's they! You are exploiting yourself <sup>through</sup> ~~with~~ an unearned increment, you are preening yourself with borrowed plumage.

Personal status must be self-acquired! A good family name is, of course, a <sup>valuable</sup> ~~wonderful~~ inheritance and one should, at all times, look upon ~~that~~ <sup>it</sup> as a sort of



challenge - a challenge to prove oneself worthy of <sup>such an</sup> ~~that~~ inheritance. But ~~that~~ a good family name, <sup>an</sup> ~~that~~ inheritance can never be a substitute for self-worth or a veneer and cover-up for worthlessness.

The surest way, my dear friends, to grow into smallness, to shrink, steadily to shrink into smallness and insignificance - ~~the surest way~~ is to start out with a false pride. It is far better to start low and to climb upward. It is far better to be humble and to grow into the esteem of our fellow-men. ~~And~~ the best and surest way to grow into greatness and ~~into~~ significance ~~xxxx~~ into a greater and more significant "I" is to respect <sup>God's</sup> ~~your~~ self. This is the beginning of all true morality and of all noble achievements in life. If you respect your own self, your own soul - if you are always aware that God has a part in you, having created you, having dowered you with the gifts of mind, having summoned you to become a co-worker with Him in the works of creation, <sup>WRHS</sup> <sup>AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES</sup> if you can wholeheartedly reply to the question "Who am I?" by saying "I am a child of God", then regardless of what <sup>your</sup> ~~the~~ circumstances in life may be, however humble, you will be lord of a vast domain and you will be <sup>grateful</sup> ~~happy~~ to be alive.

It is very interesting when we come to reflect on it, that our Bible was so eager to emphasize to man his <sup>own</sup> great importance, <sup>that</sup> ~~it~~ <sup>he</sup> used <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ most daring, and actually ~~the most daring simile~~ a prohibited simile in describing <sup>man.</sup> ~~him~~. As you know, God was never to be compared, in our religion, to any physical object, <sup>or</sup> to any physical being, ~~and~~ <sup>no</sup> physical object or being was to be likened unto Him. One of the cardinal principles of our religion " said the prophet Isaiah "To whom can you liken God" - " and what likeness can you compare with him?" There is none - it's even sacrilegious to think that there is, a possibility of a likeness unto God. And yet when it came



to tell the story of the creation of man, the Bible says that this mortal, this physical man, fashioned out of the dust - "that he ~~was~~ fashioned out of the image and the likeness of God"       "

Now in what way am I created - in what way am I really likend to Him, the Creator. What did I partake of Him that other created ~~things~~ things do not? - Why, simply this: the power to create newness within the eternal framework of this everlasting universe which God created. The power to create newness - that was the privilege which was given to man alone - that was a mandate which was given to man alone and for that man was given an equipment of mind and the capacity of soul - to create newness in the world. And our great religion sought to stress that to man so that when I try to outgrow myself - when the I of me tries to be more - when I try to reach above and beyond myself and when I feel the pulse and the power and the thrust of a new enterprise in quest of a new heaven and a new earth - that's when I'm truly myself - a being that is, and is yet to be - a being in the making, in the becoming, in the growing, as God intended it to be.

And that brings me to the second question - "What am I?". There are those who say that man is but dust and ashes - that his life is vanity, that man is vile and of small account. Mark Twain once said, " All that I care to know is that a man's a human being - that is enough for me @ he can't be any worse". On the other hand, there are those who extoll man as "creation's masterpiece " . You may recall Hamlet's soliloquy - "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! How infinite is faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel - In apprehension, how like a God!"       The Bible too speaks of man as being just a little lower than the angels - "

"Thou hast made him just a little lower than the angels". And yet the same Bible speaks of man as fashioned out of the dust "Man is like a breath, his days are like a passing shadow".



What then am I? How shall I regard myself? Dust and ashes - or the  
crown of creation. Among the Chassidim/Rebbis - more than a hundred years ago -  
there was a very wise Rebbe - and when he was confronted with this paradox, he said "A man should always carry with him 2 purses - a man should always carry with himself two pocket-books. When he is inclined to think of himself as very great, very learned, very righteous, overly important, then he should reach into one of these two purses - there he will find a scroll which contains these words - "I am but dust and ashes". And when the same man is inclined to think of himself as little, as unimportant, as ~~ax~~ low in state, as of no consequence, then he should reach into the other purse where he will find written upon a scroll these words "For my sake was the whole world created". And I think that pretty well sums up the whole story.

What am I? My unknown correspondent, Mr. Cohen, said that he was a salesman. Other men may have said "I am a merchant, I am a professional man, I am an artist, I am a Rabbi - but, good friends, that I am sure is not enough. No single profession and no single occupation exhausts the full capacity of man or is his complete justification in life. A man is most perfect in his total humanity, in striving after completeness. A good physician and a poor husband is an incomplete human-being regardless of the greatness he achieves in the field of his profession. A successful businessman and a disloyal friend is only a partial human being regardless of what success story he may write as far as his business is concerned. A fine artist and a disloyal citizen is only a qualified human being, man at a discount. The Psalmist said, " "Vindicate me, oh Lord, for I have sought to go in the very in the will of wholeness of oneness of completeness of integrity. And so the correct answer to the question "What am I?" not is/to be found in what we do for a living or in our professional careers or in our



amateur pursuits but in our human vocations. What kind of a man am I? In all my activities - in my work and outside of my work - in my leisure hours. What kind of a man am I? Am I helping people or am I hurting people? Am I only a competitive human being or am I also a cooperative human being? Am I bringing light or darkness - hate or good will wherever I go? Am I building fences of delusion or bridges of communication between men? What am I? A builder of a good society or a destroyer or a drain? Or a slacker or a deserter?

The answer to that question will determine what I am really. And the answer to the first two questions may help us to answer the third - "Why am I?" Many men, in the bitterness of their sorrows and their afflictions, have often asked themselves the question, "Why was I born?" "Why am I?" Jeremiah, the man of sorrows asks: "Why did I come forth from the womb/<sup>to see toil and sorrow</sup> and spend my days in shame?" And the sorely tried Job complains: "Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?"

And my good friends, the answer to this question, "Why am I?" as Job discovered lies ultimately in the realm of faith. If you believe, if you really believe that there is a God - a wise and beneficent Creator, ruler of the universe - then his ways, if often incomprehensible to us cannot be erratic or purposeless - and human existence, the existence he created cannot be without purpose and meaning.

I wonder what answer Helen Keller, born blind and deaf and dumb, would have given to this question "Why am I?" "Why was I altogether born?" If she had asked herself that question long ago before the manner in which she overcame her terrible handicap inspired and challenged the whole world to renewed efforts in behalf of the blind and the dumb and the deaf in society. She could not know then that she would to mean because of her handicap - to the world, she could not know, anymore than a caterpillar in its cocoon could know its ultimate destiny as a beautiful butterfly.



Those are some of the things we cannot know. I sometimes ask myself what little innocent Anne Franck, 13 years old, hiding with her family for two long years in an abandoned half of an old office building in Amsterdam, hiding from the terror of the Nazis, constantly during those months in fear of discovery and death and finally, only two months before the liberation of Holland seeing her refuge place raided by the Gestapo and herself carried off to the concentration camps at Bergen-Belsen - where she died. If Anne Franck had asked herself during those years of hiding or on her way to the death camp, "Why am I?" "Why was I born?" "What is the meaning of my life and death?" What answer could she have given? She could not foresee that her little diary into which, during those two years, and her soul she had poured her thoughts/and which was found by friends after the Gestapo raid - that this little diary would come to arouse the whole world as nothing seemed to be able to arouse ~~it~~ - to the real horrors of Nazi racialism and would teach the world unforgettable lessons in compassion, and sympathy and brotherhood and tolerance. Why am I? Only faith can answer; for not all things are revealed to us - and the final answer belongs to God.

For man, it is sufficient that he look for his answer - and parts are looking for it, of course, in the God who designed his life - will look for his answer in making his life as meaningful, as significant as possible through acts which contribute to the building of the Kingdom of God on earth. Man should be as resourceful ~~as~~ in good deeds as possible - as resourceful as ~~he~~ inventive of ~~his~~ good deeds as possible. That's the newness in man - that's the creator in man. Man should always devise new ways of giving joy to the world and joy to his Creator. And it is in such helpful ways, my friends, in such a helpful way of living that every man will find his answer to the question, "Why am I?". The hidden things ~~belonging~~ unto the Lord, but the hidden things belong to us and to our children. And what God has revealed unto us in the doing of good, of helping one another, in the building of a good community and a good society, in worth-while enterprises



of the mind and the soul that he will find sufficient meaning and significance of life that the question "Why am I?" will be automatically answered for us until the final answer is given by Him, the Creator





1. Post-Card. - For an off-hand reply - not bad!

But these are not <sup>of hand</sup> simple questions - And were Mr. Cohen inclined to give them a second thought - he would soon realize ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> his simple answers ~~do not quite~~ <sup>were</sup> ~~and~~ not quite adequate.

There are many great Cohens in the world - or John Shitler - and <sup>there are</sup> many sales men. How does <sup>this fact</sup> ~~he~~ differ from them? Surely his name and his occupation do not completely identify him.

A name is important! - But, our Rabbis already noted ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> every man really has 3 names: one which his father and mother gave him; one, <sup>which</sup> others call him (and it is amazing how unlike that name <sup>may</sup> ~~often~~ <sup>often</sup> be from the formal name which his proud parents gave him) and one which he acquires himself.

~~I wonder by what other names our great friend Jacob Cohen was called by others. - and also what name he himself acquired for himself.~~

2. When you are by yourself - you seldom think of your name but you are always aware of yourself. When you write letters or sign checks you affix your name - but when you make decisions, for example, or think through a problem, or plan a course of action, or respond to a situation of fear or danger, or love or hate - it is not your name that is involved but yourself - your complete, essential human self.



3/ And as such - who are you? - who am I?

Certainly not just "I" - just "ego".

No one stands in relation just to himself.

No one is an island unto himself.

Every man, ~~is~~ from birth until death, is an organic complex of relationships - <sup>from one type of life to another</sup> increasing, decreasing, varying in scope and intensity, but ~~never~~ inextricable.

Who am I? I am that inalienable world of associations & affairs. I am a dependant and implicated being in many other lives - <sup>the lives of</sup> parents - children - family, friends, ~~the~~ fellow-citizens, those who employ me or whom I employ.

The manner in which I react towards these multiple relationships, especially in decisions or critical situations, tells me and the world 'who I really am?'

That ~~reaction~~ <sup>is</sup> my character! This is my distinctiveness!

This is how I am true to myself - even tho I may succeed for a time in deceiving others about myself.

4/ This is my true self - and my true status! <sup>the question</sup> Some people, when asked or when they ask themselves "Who am I?" - will say: "I am the son or daughter of so and so - whom ~~commonly~~ <sup>commonly</sup> you must know as very distinguished people - a first family - notable ancestry."



this is all very well - but it isn't you! It's they!  
You are preening yourself <sup>with</sup> borrowed plumage. It is an unearned increment!  
Personal status must be self-acquired.  
A good family name is a fine inheritance - and should  
be a challenge <sup>to a man's</sup> <sup>business</sup> to prove worthy of it - but it can never  
be a substitute for self-worth - or a veneer for worth-  
lessness.

5/ The surest way to grow into smallness is to  
start out with false pride. Start low and  
climb! Be humble and grow into esteem!  
The best way to grow up is to respect yourself! This is the beginning  
of all true morality and of all noble achievement  
in life. If you respect your soul - if you are always  
that God has a part in your life having created  
you, having in His image, having endowed you with  
the gifts of mind, having inspired you to be a  
co-worker with Him in the acts of Creation - you  
if you can whole-heartedly reply to the question  
"Who am I?" by saying "I am a child of God" - then,  
whatever your contribution in life may be - you will be  
lord of a vast domain - and happy to be alive.

6/ So open was our Bible to bring home to us the importance  
and the greatness of human life - that it resorted to a  
most daring and actually a prohibited simile. The  
God was compared to any physical object and



4) no physical object or being was to be looked at. (4)  
- If I were not a man - the Bible says that <sup>the</sup> mortal, physical  
"To whom then will you liken God - or what likeness  
compare with him?"  
And yet necessary man - that he was fashioned "in  
man - ~~dust and ashes~~ - the image and likeness of God" 1 Jn 3:5-1 Jn 13:2.

6) ~~And this brings us to the 2nd question: What am I?~~  
6) In what way am "I" - the ~~created~~ <sup>created</sup> ~~being~~ <sup>being</sup> likened to Him -  
the Creator? What do I partake of that other  
created things do not? The power to create  
newness within the eternal frame - <sup>God's sovereignty</sup> ~~God's sovereignty~~  
~~reigns~~ <sup>reigns</sup> ~~man alone~~ <sup>man alone</sup> was given this <sup>glorious</sup> ~~glorious~~ <sup>mandate</sup> ~~mandate~~  
and man alone has the equipment of mind and the  
capacity of soul for it.  
When I <sup>begin</sup> ~~begin~~ to outgrow myself - to reach  
above and beyond myself - and when I feel the pulse  
and power of new enterprise - in search of  
a new heaven and a new earth - <sup>that I am</sup> ~~that I am~~  
truly myself ~~as God intended me to be~~ <sup>as God intended me to be</sup>.

7) And this brings us to the 2nd question: "What am I?"  
There are those who say that man is <sup>nothing</sup> ~~nothing~~ <sup>just</sup> ~~just~~ <sup>dust</sup> ~~dust~~  
that his life is vanity - ~~and~~ <sup>that he is</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>vile</sup> ~~vile~~ and of small  
account.



Mark Twain are said:

"All that I care to know is that a man is a human  
being, that is enough for me; he can't be any worse!"  
On the other hand there are those who extolled man as  
'creator's masterpiece': You may recall Hamlet's soliloquy

"What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason!  
how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how  
express and admirable! in action how like an angel!  
in apprehension how like a god!"

The B.R., too, speaks of man as being just a little lower  
than the angels.

And yet the Bible also speaks of man as broken out (dust)  
and destined for the dust - his life as a ~~flame~~ ~~flashing~~  
shadow as a ~~vanishing dream~~. "Man is like a breath -  
his days are like a passing shadow".

8/ What then am I? How should I regard myself?  
- dust and ashes in the creator's creation?  
Among the Chassidic Rebbes <sup>the last century</sup> there was one very  
wise - (1/2) <sup>who</sup> ~~commented upon~~ <sup>paraphrased</sup> this paradox said:

"A man should always carry with him 2 purses; when  
he is inclined to think of himself as <sup>very</sup> ~~great~~ <sup>learned</sup> -  
righteous - <sup>overly - in his own</sup> ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> should reach into the one purse ~~which~~  
when he ~~opens it~~ <sup>finds</sup> a scroll which reads: "I am but dust  
and ashes" - And when he is inclined to think of himself <sup>with</sup>  
~~as a~~ <sup>as</sup> ~~great~~ <sup>as</sup> ~~learned~~ <sup>as</sup> ~~righteous~~ <sup>as</sup> ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> should reach into the other purse - where he will find a scroll which  
reads "for my sake was the world created"



[illegible]

The Psalmist said - who has not sinned? I say  
"Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my  
integrity - in great complexities.  
~~When we try to answer the question "What am I?"~~  
The correct answer to the question "What am I?" is  
not to be found in what we do to earn a living -  
or in our professional career or our amateur pursuits -  
but in our human avocation - What kind of a man  
am I? - In all my activities - in my work and outside it  
Am I helping people or hurting them?  
Am I competitive <sup>also</sup> but cooperative?  
Am I bringing light or darkness - hate or goodwill?  
Am I building pieces <sup>of disunion</sup> or bridges of concavation?  
What am I? A builder, the good way - ~~a destroyer~~ -  
a slovenly - ~~a~~ a dove in a desert?



10/ The answer to the first 2 questions may help us to answer the third: "Why am I?"

(Men) in the bitterness of <sup>their</sup> sorrow and afflictions ~~not~~ have often asked this question: "Why has I been?"

~~These~~ Jeremiah the man of sorrows - asks: "Why did I come forth from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?"

And the sorely-tried Job complains: "Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?"

11/ The ~~ultimate~~ answer to the question "Why am I?" as Job found - lies ultimately in the realm of faith.

If you believe that there is a wise and beneficent creator and ruler of the universe - there is a way, even if incomprehensible to us, cannot be erratic and purposeless, and human existence, and the existence of every human being, cannot be without purpose or meaning.

(a) I wonder what Helen Keller, born blind, deaf and dumb, would have given to the question "Why am I? Why am I deteriorated?" - if she had asked herself the question long ago - before ~~the~~ the manner in which she overcame her terrible handicaps, conquered and challenged the world to revolutionary new effects in behalf of the blind and the deaf & ~~crippled~~ <sup>socially</sup>. She could not know anyone more than the caterpillar hidden in the cocoon knows of his destiny as a beautiful butterfly.



(b) 1/1 little Anne Frank - 13 yrs old - hiding for 2 long 18  
years in an abandoned half of an old office building in  
Amsterdam from the Nazis ~~constant~~ <sup>tears of the Nazis</sup> constantly in fear  
of discovery and death, and finally, 2 months before the  
liberation of Holland, ~~leaving~~ <sup>seeing</sup> her refuge place ~~reached~~ <sup>discovered</sup>  
by the ~~Nazis~~ <sup>Nazis</sup> and herself ~~led~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>carried</sup> to the  
concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen where she  
died - if Anne had asked herself ~~on the way~~  
~~through~~ the years of hiding or on the way to the death  
camp - "Why am I?" - "Why am I born?" - "What  
is the meaning of my life and death?" - What answer  
could she have? She could not foresee that her private  
diary, into which she poured her thoughts and her soul,  
and which was found ~~after~~ <sup>by friends</sup> after the raid,  
would arouse the world to the horrors of Nazi racialism,  
and would ~~lead~~ <sup>bring it</sup> the world ~~to~~ <sup>in</sup> compassion,  
sympathy, ~~and~~ <sup>brotherhood</sup> and tolerance?

(c) Why am I? only faith can answer; for not all  
things are revealed to us - and the deeper answers  
belong to God.

in living "as if God had  
assigned his life -"

12/ For man - the answer must be found in making his  
life as meaningful as possible through acts which  
contribute to the building of the Kingdom of God on earth.  
Man should be as resourceful in good deeds as  
he is in evil - He should always seek new ways of  
giving joy to the world and to his Creator. In <sup>such</sup> a helpful way of  
living ~~we~~ <sup>we</sup> find the answer to the question - Why am I?



SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

April 5, 1959

DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

THREE QUESTIONS EVERY MAN SHOULD ASK HIMSELF

WHO AM I? WHAT AM I? WHY AM I?

After I announced the subject of my forthcoming sermon last Sunday, I received in the mail a postcard. It read like this: "Dear Rabbi - you asked three questions. I give you the answers: Who am I? - Jacob Cohen - What am I? - a salesman - Why am I? - Oser if I know." Now, for an off-hand reply - for these questions are really not off-hand questions or simple ones and were my correspondent inclined to give them a second thought, I feel that he would find that his truthful answers are not quite adequate. There are many Jacob Cohens in the world, many John Smiths and tens of thousands of - hundreds of thousands, I suppose, of salesmen - and how does my friend Jacob Cohen differ from them? Surely his name and his occupation, on reflection, do not completely identify him. A name is important, but our Rabbis already long ago stated that in fact every man has three names - the name which his father and mother give him at birth, the name by which other people called him - and that's not often correspondent to the name father and mother gave him - there may be discrepancies often times - and the name which he himself acquired.

When you are by yourself, you seldom think of your name. You are always aware of yourself - you seldom think of your name. When you write letters, of course, or sign checks, you append your name, but when you are thinking through a problem or making a decision, or planning a course of action, or when you are reacting to a situation of danger or fear, of love or hate, your name is barely not at all involved. It is yourself which is involved - complete, essential human self.



And as such, as an essential human self - who are you? Who am I? Certainly not just I, not just my ego for no one stands in the world simply in relation to himself alone. No one is an island unto himself. Every man from birth until death is an organic complex of relationship - sometimes increasing relationship, sometimes decreasing, sometimes shifting from one period of life to another, varying in scope and varying in intensity, but forever inextricable. Then, Who Am I? - I am that inalienable world of associations, of affinities. I am a very dependent and implicated being, implicated in many other lives - inextricably implicated in many lives, sometimes willingly and sometimes unwillingly. I am implicated in the lives of parables, of children, of family, of friends, of fellow-citizens, of those whom I employ or who employ me. And the manner in which I react in these multiple relationships - the manner in which I react, especially in moments which are decisive, in critical moments - it is this manner of my reactions to these relationships which tell me and tell the world WHO I REALLY AM. That reaction of myself to these inextricable relationships of mine - that reaction is my character. That is my distinctiveness! This is how I really know myself, Even though I might succeed for a long time or a short time to deceive others about myself, I am not deceiving myself.

This is my true self - this is my true status - this is I. Some people when asked the question "Who Am I?" or when they ask themselves this question are inclined the answer by saying "I am the son, or I am the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. So and So whom you surely must know, very distinguished people. I come from a fine family, a first family, I come from notable stock and notable ancestry. Well, that is all very fine but it isn't you - it's they! You are exploiting yourself with an unearned increment - you are preening yourself with borrowed plumage. Personal status must be self-acquired! A good family name is, of course, a wonderful inheritance and one should, at all times, look upon that as a short of a



challenge - a challenge to prove oneself worthy of that inheritance. But that good family name, that inheritance can never be a substitute for self-worth or a veneer and cover-up for worthlessness.

The surest way, my dear friends, to grow into smallness, to shrink, steadily to shrink into smallness and insignificance - the surest way is to start out with a false pride. It is far better to start low and to climb upward. It is far better to be humble and to grow into the esteem of our fellow-men. And the best and surest way to grow into greatness and into significance ~~into~~ into a greater and more significant "I" is to respect yourself. This is the beginning of all true morality and of all noble achievements in life. If you respect your own self, your own soul - if you are always aware that God has a part in you, having created you, having dowered you with the gifts of mind, having summoned you to become a co-worker with Him in the works of creation. If you can wholeheartedly reply to the question "Who am I?" by saying "I am a child of God", then regardless of what ~~the~~ <sup>your</sup> circumstances of life may be, however humble, you will be lord of a vast domain and you will be happy to be alive.

It is very interesting when we come to reflect on it that our Bible was so eager to emphasize to man his great importance - that it used the most daring, and actually ~~the most prohibited~~ a prohibited simile in describing him. As you know, God was never to be compared in our religion to any physical object, to any physical being and no physical object or being was to be likened unto Him. One of the cardinal principles of our religion " said the prophet Isaiah "To whom can you liken God" - " and what likeness can you compare with him?" There is none - it's even sacrilegious to think that there is, a possibility of a likeness unto God. And yet when it came



to tell the story of the creation of man, the Bible says that this mortal, this physical man, fashioned out of the dust - "that he was fashioned out of the image and the likeness of God" " "

Now in what way am I created - in what way am I really likend to Him, the Creator. What did I partake of Him that other created ~~things~~ things do not? - Why, simply this: the power to create newness within the eternal framework of this everlasting universe which God created. The power to create newness - that was the privilege which was given to man alone - that was a mandate which was given to man alone and for that man was given an equipment of mind and the capacity of soul - to create newness in the world. And our great religion sought to stress that to man so that when I try to outgrow myself - when the I of me tries to be more - when I try to reach above and beyond myself and when I feel the pulse and the power and the thrust of a new enterprise in quest of a new heaven and a new earth - that's when I'm truly myself - a being that is, and is yet to be - a being in the making, in the becoming, in the growing, as God intended it to be.

And that brings me to the second question - "What am I?". There are those who say that man is but dust and ashes - that his life is vanity, that man is vile and of small account. Mark Twain once said, "All that I care to know is that a man's a human being - that is enough for me & he can't be any worse". On the other hand, there are those who extoll man as "creation's masterpiece" . You may recall Hamlet's soliloquy - "What a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! How infinite is faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel - In apprehension, how like a God!" The Bible too speaks of man as being just a little lower than the angels - " "

"Thou hast made him just a little lower than the angels". And yet the same Bible speaks of man as fashioned out of the dust "Man is like a breath, his days are like a passing shadow".



What then am I? How shall I regard myself? Dust and ashes - or the  
ic  
crown of creation. Among the Chossiv/Rebbis - more than a hundred years ago -  
there was a very wise Rebbi - and when he was confronted with this paradox, he said "A man should always carry with him 2 purses -  
a man should always carry with himself two pocket-books. When he is inclined to  
think of himself as very great, very learned, very righteous, overly important,  
then he should reach into one of these two purses - there he will find a scroll  
which contains these words - "I am but dust and ashes". And when the same man is  
inclined to think of himself as little, as unimportant, as ~~xx~~ low in state, as of  
no consequence, then he should reach into the other purse where he will find written  
upon a scroll these words "For my sake was the whole world created". And I think  
that pretty well sums up the whole story.

What am I? My unknown correspondent, Mr. Cohen, said that he was a salesman .  
Other men may have said "I am a merchant, I am a professional man, I am an artist,  
I am a Rabbi - but, good friends, that I am sure is not enough. No single profession  
and no single occupation exhausts the full capacity of man or is his complete  
justification in life. A man is most perfect in his total humanity, in striving  
after completeness. A good physician and a poor husband is an incomplete human-  
being regardless of the greatness he achieves in the field of his profession. A  
successful businessman and a disloyal friend is only a partial human being regardless  
of what success story he may write as far as his business is concerned. A fine artist  
and a disloyal citizen is only a qualified human being, man at a discount. The  
Psalmist said, " "Vindicate me, oh Lord,  
for I have sought to go in the very in the will of wholeness of oneness  
of completeness of integrity. And so the correct answer to the question "What am I?"  
not  
is/to be found in what we do for a living or in our professional careers or in our



amateur pursuits but in our human vocations. What kind of a man am I? In all my activities - in my work and outside of my work - in my leisure hours. What kind of a man am I? Am I helping people or am I hurting people? Am I only a competitive human being or am I also a cooperative human being? Am I bringing light or darkness - hate or good will wherever I go? Am I building fences of delusion or bridges of communication between men What am I? A builder of a good society or a destroyer or a drain? Or a slacker or a deserter?

The answer to that question will determine what I am really. And the answer to the first two questions may help us to answer the third - "Why am I?" Many men, in the bitterness of their sorrows and their afflictions, have often asked themselves the question, "Why was I born?" "Why am I?" Jeremiah, the man of sorrows asks: "Why did I come forth from the womb/<sup>to see toil and sorrow</sup> and spend my days in shame?" And the sorely tried Job complains: "Why is light given to him that is in misery, and life to the bitter in soul?"

And my good friends, the answer to this question, "Why am I?" as Job discovered lies ultimately in the realm of faith. If you believe, if you really believe that there is a God - a wise and beneficent Creator, ruler of the universe - then his ways, if often incomprehensible to us cannot be erratic or purposeless - and human existence, the existence he created cannot be without purpose and meaning.

I wonder what answer Helen Keller, born blind and deaf and dumb, would have given to this question "Why am I?" "Why was I altogether born" If she had asked herself that question long ago before the manner in which she overcame her terrible handicap inspired and challenged the whole world to renewed efforts in behalf of the blind and the dumb and the deaf in society. She could not know then that she would to mean because of her handicap - to the world, she could not know, anymore than a caterpillar in its cocoon could know its ultimate destiny as a beautiful butterfly.



Those are some of the things we cannot know. I sometimes ask myself what little innocent Anne Frank, 13 years old, hiding with her family for two long years in an abandoned half of an old office building in Amsterdam, hiding from the terror of the Nazis, constantly during those months in fear of discovery and death and finally, only two months before the liberation of Holland seeing her refuge place raided by the Gestapo and herself carried off to the concentration camps at Bergen-Belsen - where she died. If Anne Frank had asked herself during those years of hiding or on her way to the death camp, "Why am I?" "Why was I born?" "What is the meaning of my life and death?" What answer could she have given? She could not foresee that her little diary into which, during those two years, and her soul she had poured her thoughts/and which was found by friends after the Gestapo raid - that this little diary would come to arouse the whole world as nothing seemed to be able to arouse it - to the real horrors of Nazi racialism and would teach the world unforgettable lessons in compassion, and sympathy and brotherhood and tolerance. Why am I? Only faith can answer; for not all things are revealed to us - and the final answer belongs to God.

For man, it is sufficient that he look for his answer - and parts are looking for it, of course, in the God who designed his life - will look for his answer in making his life as meaningful, as significant as possible through acts which contribute to the building of the Kingdom of God on earth. Man should be as resourceful <sup>in</sup> good deeds as possible - as resourceful as ~~he~~ inventive of ~~in~~ good deeds as possible. That's the newness in man - that's the creator in man. Man should always devise new ways of giving joy to the world and joy to his Creator. And it is in such helpful ways, my friends, in such a helpful way of living that every man will find his answer to the question, "Why am I?". The hidden things <sup>unto</sup> belong ~~ing~~ to the Lord, but the hidden things belong to us and to our children. And what God has revealed unto us in the doing of good, of helping one another, in the building of a good community and a good society, in worth-while enterprises



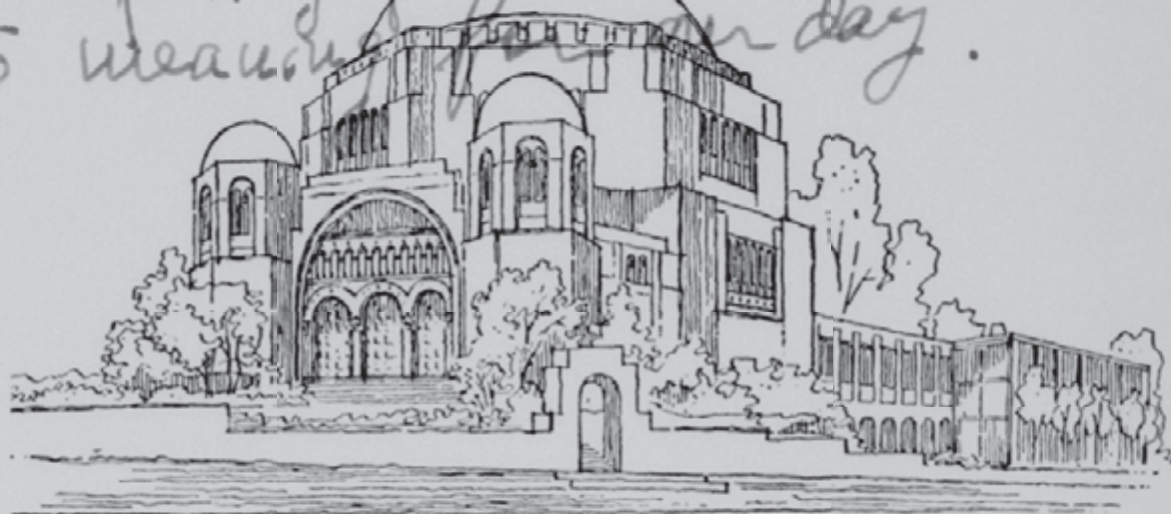
of the mind and the soul that he will find sufficient meaning and significance of life that the question "Why am I?" will be automatically answered for us until the final answer is given by Him, the Creator





**THE TEMPLE**  
CLEVELAND, OHIO  
April 5, 1959  
Vol. XLV No. 26

*The Lost Art of Story Telling  
The rich tapestry of the 19th century  
and its meaning for our day.*



## ON JOINING A TEMPLE — FROM THE RABBIS' DESK

The summer months which lie just ahead are months of organization and preparation for The Temple. Often during these months we are questioned concerning membership in The Temple. It seems that this is the time of year when families think of enrolling in a congregation.

I have often been asked in the last several weeks how one goes about joining The Temple. The procedure is essentially a simple one. A visit to the office of our Executive Secretary can complete quickly all the necessary forms.

There are no restrictions of any kind on Temple membership. The Temple has always maintained an open admissions policy and hopes to be able to continue to do so in the future.

Many have asked whether The Temple has a waiting list. A waiting list implies a membership whose level is fixed at some arbitrary figure. The Temple has not set any such figure. Our facilities and our staff are equal to present need and can be increased to meet future need. We have been able to sustain a large membership without limiting in any way opportunities for active participation or the level of The Temple's personal services.

Let me add just this. If some one asks you about joining our Temple or any Temple, advise them not to choose their congregation off-handedly. Every congregation has its own program, its pattern of worship and its organizational set-up. One ought to be sure that

**SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE**  
**April 5, 1959**  
**10:30 o'clock**

**RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER**  
will speak on

**THREE QUESTIONS EVERY MAN SHOULD ASK HIMSELF**  
**WHO AM I? WHAT AM I? WHY AM I?**

**FRIDAY EVENING SERVICES**  
5:30 to 6:10

**SATURDAY MORNING SERVICES**  
11:00 to 12:00

the flavor of a Temple's life meets the needs of one's particular family. One ought to be sympathetic to that synagogues religious outlook and to the pattern of religious worship there conducted. A prospective member ought to be certain that these basic dimensions of a congregation's life fit his personal needs and those of his family, and then and only then should he take steps to join.

*Daniel Jeremy Silver*

P.S. The new Beacon Press edition of Dr. Silver's "A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel" is now available for purchase in The Temple Library or from Mrs. Ira Saks of The Temple Women's Association at most Temple functions.

### MUSIC FOR SUNDAY

Organ		
Little Prelude and Fugue in F		Bach
April Song		Stebbins
Dreams		McAmis
Organ		
Opening Psalm—Somachtee Beomrim		Thatcher
Bor'chu (Congregational)		Sulzer
Sh'ma-Boruch (Congregational)		Traditional
Mi Chomocho (Congregational)		Sulzer
Kedusha		Algazi
Silent Devotion—May the Words		Schlesinger
Miss Wischmeyer		
Before the Address:		
Psalm 46—God Is Our Refuge		Ward-Stephens
Mrs. Strasser		
Olelu-Vaanachnu		Lewandowski



## 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. LUNTZ.....President

LEO W. NEUMARK.....Vice-President

ELI GOLDSTON.....Vice-President

MAX EISNER.....Treasurer

EDWARD D. FRIEDMAN...Associate Treasurer

## THE TEMPLE HIGH SCHOOL

### PARENTS' DISCUSSION GROUP

Thursday, April 9, 1959

8:30 P.M.

Board Room

### MR. SIMON MESSING

will speak on

### "MY YEAR WITH THE FALASHAS"

One of the few anthropologists who has had the rare opportunity of living for a year with the Falashas, an ancient group of dark-skinned Jews who inhabit Ethiopia. Mr. Messing is now studying at Hiram College. He will show, as part of his lecture, colored slides taken during his stay with the Falashas.

Co-chairmen:

Mrs. Jerome S. Malevan  
FA 1-6989

Mrs. Milton Tatelbaum  
SK 1-9163

### THE TEMPLE CHORUS

In order that members of The Temple Chorus may attend the Mr. and Mrs. Club Show on Wednesday evening, April 8th, the Chorus will not meet on that date. Rehearsal will be held instead on Thursday, April 9th at 8:30 P.M. in the Social Hall.

### ALTAR FLOWERS

The flowers which will grace the altar on Sunday morning, April 5th, are contributed in memory of Harry S. Heiner, by his wife, Beckie S. Heiner.

### WENDY LOIS ABRAHAMS FUND

A special fund has been established in memory of Wendy Lois Abrahams by her family and their friends. Contributions will be used to provide an appropriate memorial in the Religious School.

### PASSOVER SERVICES

Passover Services will be held at The Temple on Thursday, April 23rd and Wednesday, April 29th. The annual Temple Seder will be held in the Social Hall on Wednesday evening, April 22nd at 6:30 p.m. Reservations may be made through The Temple Office.

### FATHER-SON BANQUET

Fathers and sons will share an afternoon of fun on Sunday, April 5th. After attending services with their older sons, fathers will meet the youngsters after Religious School and all will enjoy a turkey dinner in the Social Hall. A program featuring nationality dancers will be held in Luntz Auditorium after the luncheon. Favors, souvenirs and prizes will be distributed.

Almost four hundred mothers and daughters attended a similar banquet on Sunday, March 22nd.

Both the Mother-Daughter and Father-Son Banquets were arranged by a committee of Religious School parents. Mrs. Melvin Lazerick and Mrs. Robert Coplan were Co-chairmen of the Mother-Daughter Banquet. Mrs. Ernest Siegler and Mrs. Leonard Beal are Co-chairmen of the Father-Son Banquet. Mrs. Samuel Pressman was in charge of Publicity; Food, Mrs. Irving Lieberman; Decorations, Mrs. Morris Hausman and Mrs. Sanford Gray; Gifts and Favors, Mrs. Joseph Malinas and Mrs. Arnold Rose; Invitations, Mrs. Jack Schwartz. Also assisting were Mesdames Norman Copeland, Irwin Duchon, Jared Faulb, Robert Frankel, Sheldon Guren, Erwin Levin, Hal Moses, Morton Reese and Alan Unger.

### THE TEMPLE MEN'S CLUB

#### APRIL EVENT

Wednesday, April 15th

8:15 P.M.

Luntz Auditorium

### RABBI ARTHUR J. LELYVELD

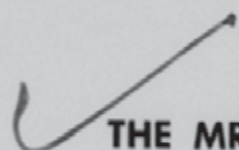
of the Fairmount Temple

Temple Men's Club Members and their Ladies will have the opportunity and the pleasure of meeting Rabbi and Mrs. Lelyveld and welcoming them to our Temple.

Refreshments and Social Hour

Admission by Membership Card





**THE MR. AND MRS. CLUB**

*Lobby*

Tuesday, April 7, 1959

Curtain—8:30 P.M.

Wednesday, April 8, 1959

Luntz Auditorium

**MY FAIR NATIE**

An Original Musical Comedy in Three Acts.

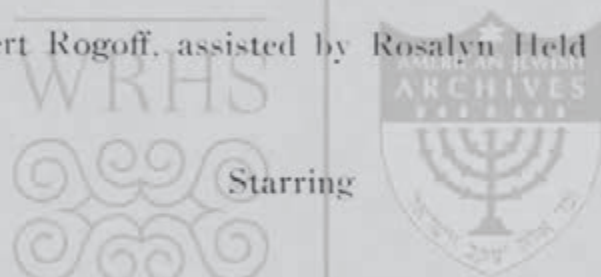
*Broads*

Authors—Richard Bracker, Lawrence Rubin, Herbert Schechter, Eugene Shipley  
assisted by—Shirley Curtiss and Sue Nurenberg

Producers—Jerold and Beverly Rabnick, Michael and Eve Art

Directors—Natalie Epstein, Stanley Kramer

Music Director—Robert Rogoff, assisted by Rosalyn Held and Sue Nurenberg



Starring

Marilyn Caplane

Lionel Greenbaum

Bette Lawrence

Eunice Combs

Rosalyn Held

Albert and Terry Rosen

Dr. Marvin Dorfman

Dr. Saul Kammen

Herbert Schechter

William Goldman

Eugene Shipley

and

The June Haas Dancers

Patron Tickets \$3.50

Admission \$2.00

For reservations call

Morton and Florence Krasner, SK 1-2202

Myron and Hilde Samuels, FA 1-5794

Ted and Idarose Luntz, TE 1-8695

Harold and Marilyn Schobel, EV 2-3178



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### DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sunday, April 5 — Sunday Morning Services  
Father-Son Banquet
- Monday, April 6 — Ulpan Hebrew Classes
- Tuesday, April 7 — Ulpan Hebrew Classes  
Temple Women's Association Tuesday Sewing  
Mr. and Mrs. Club Show
- Wednesday, April 8 — Ulpan Hebrew Classes  
Mr. and Mrs. Club Show
- Thursday, April 9 — Ulpan Hebrew Classes  
High School Parents Discussion Group  
Temple Chorus
- Sunday, April 12 — Sunday Morning Services

**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.