



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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Is There Anything You have Omitted from Your Life?, 1961.

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SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

THE TEMPLE
December 10, 1961

DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

IS THERE ANYTHING YOU HAVE OMITTED FROM YOUR LIFE?

In the Book of Kings there is recorded a strange miracle which was performed by the prophet, Elisha.

"Elisha came again to Gilgal; and there was a famine in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him; and he said unto his servant: 'Set on the great pot, and boil pottage for the sons of the prophets.' And one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds in his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage. Then they poured out for the men to eat. And as they were eating of the pottage, they cried out: 'O man of God, there is death in the pot.' But he said: 'Then bring me meal.' And he cast it into the pot; and he said: 'Pour out for the people, that they may eat. And there was no harm in the pot.'

Miracles should not be explained or rationalized, for in so doing they cease to be miracles. They belong to the ancient poetry of religion and the childhood of the human race. This particular miracle always intrigued me by its imagery, and by what it suggests about the conduct of life. Here a member of the school of prophets, which was presided over by Elisha, goes out into the field to gather herbs so that a pot of pottage could be boiled for the members of the prophetic fraternity, so that they could eat; for there was a famine in the land. He gathers a lap full of wild gourds, cuts them up and boils them in the pot. Then he pours out the pottage for the men to eat. Suddenly the men cry out: "O Man of God, there is death in the pot!" -- What was meant to be food to sustain life turned out to be poison. Elisha then said: 'Bring meal', and he threw it into the pot and said: "Pour out for the men that they may eat." And there was no longer any harm in the pot.

Obviously something was added to that pottage which was not previously present, which acted as an antidote and turned death into life. Without that something, that which was intended to be food proved to be poison! I suggest that Elisha's miracle is not an uncommon one. It occurs frequently -- though infrequently observed. Very often men gather, sometimes at great cost, all the ingredients for a happy life, and, lo and behold, there is death in the pot! Something had been omitted, forgotten, overlooked, something so essential that what was to be life-giving and happiness-yielding, turns out to be frustration, sorrow and defeat. Many a life lacks a certain substance which, acting like a spiritual catalysis, could bring about a happy union of the many elements which compose it.

I am thinking at the moment of the most unhappy man of the Bible. Not Job, for though Job suffered much and complained much, he ended his days in peace, restored in fortune and reconciled in faith. His doubts, his questionings and his rebellion were finally resolved into an humble acquiescence and acceptance of the ways of the omnipotent God which are often beyond man's understanding, too wonderful for him.

The unhappiest man of the Bible is Kohelet, son of David, King of Jerusalem. He hated life, he declared. His heart was full of despair. He saw no profit in anything that he was doing. He found everything pointless, wearisome, repetitious, and a striving after wind. It were better not to have been born at all.

Was Kohelet a slave that he complained so much? Was he blind or lame or otherwise afflicted? No, not at all! He was a King! He had great power and vast treasures of silver and gold. He had made great works and builded many houses and palaces and planted many vineyards. He had many men-servants and maid-servants and enjoyed all the delights of the sons of men. He denied himself nothing.

Was he an ignorant man? Why no! He had gotten great wisdom and knowledge, more than all that were before him over Jerusalem. He had applied his heart to know and to search out, and to seek wisdom and the reason of things. But that, too

he found to be a sore task and a weariness of the flesh. For in much wisdom he found much vexation; and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow. In another book of the Bible, the Book of Proverbs, we find another and a different evaluation of man's quest for knowledge and wisdom:

"Happy is the man who finds wisdom,
And the man who gets understanding,
His ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all his paths are peace.
My son, keep sound wisdom...
If you sit down you will not be afraid,
When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet
For the Lord will be your confidence.
Wherein is the difference in these two conflicting attitudes
towards wisdom."

The author of the Book of Proverbs believes that the beginning of wisdom is reverence of God -- and sees as its essence, doing good in the world:

"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is done, when it is in your power to do it."

"Do not say to your neighbor, 'Go and come again, tomorrow I will give it' -- when you have it with you."

What was [~]wong with Kohelet? Having everything, why did he lack everything?

What one thing had been omitted from his make-up which turned everything he touched, everything he acquired, everything he wrought, everything he engaged in into grief, into cinders, ashes, dust? Why were all his days pain, his work vexation, why, even in the night did his heart take no rest? Why was there death in the pot?...


It was not that he had omitted God from his life. Kohelet was not an atheist or an agnostic. He believed in God, and unlike Job, he did not argue with Him nor demand an accounting. He believed in God but in a God who was not particularly concerned with him, a God who created the world, fixed its laws, and let it go at that. In ^{the} order of this world, in its moral order, as in its physical order,

nothing could be changed. Just as the sun rises and sets and rises again, just as the wind blows and turns about continually in its circuit, just as the rivers run into the sea and the sea is never full, so the generations of men come and go upon the earth. That which has been is that which shall be, and that which has been done is that which shall be done. That which is crooked can never be made straight, and that which is wanting can never be made up. Kohelet was convinced that whatever God does, is done forever. Nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it. That which is, has been long ago, and that which is to be, has already been. There is nothing new under the sun, nothing new in the universe or in man or in society. This, of course, is not true. The history of man, over long periods of time, has not been fixed or static. It has been a record growth and progress of climbing from lower levels to higher.

What was omitted from Kohelet's life was a belief not in God, but in a demanding God -- in a God who calls upon man to act, to seek justice, to pursue righteousness, to loose the chains of wickedness, to undo the bonds of the yoke, to break every yoke, to bring the prisoner out of the dungeon, and out of the prison-house them who dwell in darkness. What was missing was a strong conviction which interfuses one's entire being, which becomes an impulse, a motive and a mandate, and which makes one the willing servant of the compelling idea.

What was omitted from the banquet of the pampered, surfeited and resigned life of this sovereign who had tasted everything of life, this extreme individualist and egoist was the choice of courage and dedication. Nothing had ever stabbed his spirit broad awake to realize that it was his duty and his opportunity to try to make straight that which was crooked in the world about him, and to supply what was wanting. He had closed his heart to the challenge of God, who summoned man to be His co-worker in creation. Kohelet never knew what it was to

a wicked man.



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be afraid. Once a man permits this kind of God, he will be afraid/no one. He will not have to conform out of fear of antagonizing men. With God, a man can stand alone. Without Him, a man must seek security in conformity or he is entirely lost.

Consult the pages of our history! When the children of Israel were loyal to their God, who was always a demanding and exacting God -- an El Kana -- they knew themselves to be invincible. They were not afraid to be different and to stand alone. "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be in dread of them (the nations with whom they were to do battle); for it is the Lord your God who goes with you, he will not fail you or forsake you."

But time and time again, then the people were disloyal to their God, they became afraid to stand alone and to be different. When, for example, they became afraid of the powerful Philistines and their iron chariots, they clamored for a king to rule over them. They rejected God from being king over them. They cried out "Appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations" "that we also may be like all the nations"...Whenever the people succumbed to the allurements of their environment, and could not abide by their austere faith and the demands of its exalted ethical code, they would cry out: "Let us be like all the other nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone."

On Chanukah, we are reminded of one man who dared to be different and to stand alone because he had not omitted this demanding God from his life. His name was Mattathias, and he lived at a time of great political turmoil and spiritual chaos. Many Jews were falling away from their religion. They were attracted by the Hellenistic culture and civilization which the conquering Greeks had introduced into Asia Minor and Palestine. All the other conquered peoples had adopted the

ways of the Greeks, and many Jews, too, wanted to be like them in all things, even though the Greek way of life was far inferior to the demands of the Mosaic law and the traditional standards of the Jewish people. When King Antichus determined, for political reasons, to suppress the Jewish faith altogether and so achieve a complete amalgam of all the peoples of his empire, many Jews readily acquiesced. Not so Mattathias, the Hasmonean, the priest from Modin. He dared to stand alone:

"But Mattathias answered and spake with a loud voice. Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him and fall away each one from the religion of his fathers, yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the Law to depart from our faith either to the right hand or the left. Then Mattathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice saying: Whosoever is zealous of the law and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me. So he and his sons fled into the mountains, and they went about pulling down the heathen altars, and they rescued the law out of the hands of the Gentiles."

His valiant son, Judah, the Maccabee, followed his example. He also dared to stand alone, secure in his faith.

"When all the people feared and trembled at the sight of the great number of the enemy, and said: 'What? Shall we be able, being a small company, to fight against so great and so strong a multitude?' Judah answered: 'With the God of heaven it is all one to save by many or by few'. And Judah led them into battle, and behold the hosts of the enemy were discomfited before them. And Israel had a great deliverance."

These men did not say: "Vanity of vanities all is vanity". What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?" Why resist the Greeks? Why fight? Why sacrifice? What difference does it make? What has been is what

will be." What is crooked can never be made straight, anyhow, and who will ever remember what we do, anyway? Oh, no! These men fought like lions for faith and freedom, for covenant and heritage. The few fought against the many, the weak against the strong; for an undeniable and irresistible command came from the God whom they had not omitted from their lives, even as their strength derived from Him. And what they achieved was not forgotten. To this day, and throughout the world, candles are kindled in their honor. Their memorial has endured throughout the generations; for their brave deeds of faith, courage and sacrifice preserved the noble ethical and spiritual heritage of their people for mankind.

What have you omitted from your life? It is a searching question to ask yourself. Every one should ask himself that question, for no life is complete. Are you aware of some great omission, some gap, some void? Are you afraid that your life is adding up to a lap full of wild gourds, from which the little handful of meal is missing which alone can neutralize their harmful poisons? Do you find ~~yourself~~ yourself, though living in a world of plenty, steadily growing empty, drained, and drifting -- drifting into a psychic malaise of listlessness or into an even more dangerous mood of frustration, cynicism or misanthropy?

Is it love that you have omitted from your life, or kindness or compassion, or forgiveness, or justice, or truth? Israel grouped them all together for they are all facets of one unchangeable and indispensable essence. Isfael grouped them all together and called them Adonai, Adonai....

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I am thinking at the moment of the most unhappy man of the Bible. Not Job, for though Job suffered much and complained much, he ended his days in peace, restored in fortune and reconciled in faith. His doubts, his questionings and his rebellion were finally resolved into an humble acquiescence and acceptance of the ways of the omnipotent God which are often beyond man's understanding, too wonderful for him.

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What was wrong with Kohelet? Having everything, why did he lack everything? What one thing had been omitted from his make-up which turned everything he touched, everything he acquired, everything he wrought, everything he engaged in into grief, into cinders, ashes, dust? Why were all his days pain, his work vexation, why, even in the night did his heart take no rest? Why was there death in the pot?...

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What was omitted from the banquet of the pampered, surfeited and resigned life of this sovereign who had tasted everything of life, was the chalice of courage and dedication. Nothing had ever stabbed his spirit broad awake to realize that it was his duty and his opportunity to try to make straight that which was crooked in the world about him, and to supply what was wanting. He had closed his heart to the challenge of God, who summoned man to be His co-worker in creation. Kohelet never knew what it was to hunger and thirst after righteousness. He sought for peace of mind and for meaning and dignity where they could never be found -- in a restless quest after pleasures, and in the pursuit of knowledge, which remained forever untouched by the burning coal of mission and challenge to help others. Kohelet saw the oppression of the poor all around him and the violent perverting of justice in the state -- but he charged it ^{all} up to the Almighty and that ended the matter for him. He did not come down from

his throne and did not go out of ^{gates of} his palace to correct the evil which he knew to exist. He was content to absolve himself of all responsibility for what was happening all about him and to leave it all to God! "I said in my heart: 'The virtuous and the wicked God will judge.'" He, himself, never fought the good fight. Why then should he have expected to find any victories in life? What reforms did he attempt to introduce, what evils did he set out to undo? If he had tried, even if he failed, he would never have felt ^{so} utterly woe-begone and bereft.

Kohelet was not a wicked man. He lacked the sacred fire. There was ^{one} single blind spot in his spiritual vision. Something basic had been omitted from his life -- the catalysis, the solder, the cement. The driving God, the dynamics of moral purpose, the summoning voice of duty -- was not there -- to arouse and to disturb him. Had they been there, Kohelet would not have been concerned so much that his garments should always be white and that his head should never lack any oil. He would undoubtedly have experienced much exhaustion while working, in spotted garments, along-side of his fellow men, building the city of God, but in the night his heart would have been at rest and his sleep would have been sweet. His days would have known pride and dignity, moments of lift and moments of ecstasy.

There are other compensations which accrue to those who do not omit this driving God from their lives. Such men can afford to be different and need never be afraid. Once a man permits this kind of God to guide him, once he links up his destiny with the purposes of such a God, ^{will be} he/~~is~~ afraid of no one. He will not have to conform out of fear of antagonizing men. With God, a man can stand alone. Without Him, a man must seek security in conformity or he is entirely lost.

Consult the pages of our history! When the children of Israel were loyal to their God, who was always a demanding and exacting God -- an El Kana -- they knew themselves to be invincible. They were not afraid to be different and to stand alone. "Be strong and of good courage, do not fear or be in dread of them (the nations with whom they were to do battle); for it is the Lord your God who goes with you, he will not fail you or forsake you."

But time and time again, then the people were disloyal to their God, they ^{became} ~~were~~ afraid to stand alone and to be different. When, for example, they became afraid of the ^{powerful} Philistines and their iron chariots, they clamored for a king to rule over them. They rejected God from being king over them. They cried out -- *למה לנו מלך כגוים* -- "Appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations" -- *והיו לנו כגוים* -- "that we also may be like all the nations".... Whenever the people succumbed to the allurements of their environment, and could not abide by their austere faith and the demands of its exalted ethical code, they would cry out: "Let us be like all the other nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone."

On Chanukah, we are reminded of one man who dared to be different ^{and to stand alone} because he had not omitted this demanding God from his life. His name was Mattathias, and he lived at a time of great political turmoil and spiritual chaos. Many Jews were falling away from their religion. They were attracted by the Hellenistic ~~culture and civilization which the conquering Greeks had introduced~~ culture and civilization which the conquering Greeks had introduced into Asia Minor and Palestine. All the other conquered peoples had adopted the ways of the Greeks, and many Jews, too, wanted to be like them in all things, even though the Greek way of life was far inferior to the demands of the Mosaic law and the

traditional standards of the Jewish people. When King Antichus determined, for political reasons, to suppress the Jewish faith altogether and so achieve a complete amalgam of all the peoples of his empire, many Jews readily acquiesced. Not so Mattathias, the Hasmonean, the priest from Modin. He dared to stand alone:

"But Mattathias answered and spake with a loud voice. Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him and fall away each one from the religion of his fathers, yet will I and my sons and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. God forbid that we should forsake the Law to depart from our faith either to the right hand or the left. Then Mattathias cried throughout the city with a loud voice saying: Whosoever is zealous of the law and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me. So he and his sons fled into the mountains, and they went about pulling down the heathen altars, and they rescued the law out of the hands of the Gentiles!"
His valiant son, Judah, the Maccabee, followed his example. He also dared to stand alone, secure in his faith.

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fought like lions for faith and freedom, for covenant and heritage. The few fought against the many, the weak against the strong; for an undeniable and unresistable command came from the God whom they had not omitted from their lives, even as their strength derived from Him. And what they achieved was not forgotten. To this day, and throughout the world, candles are kindled in their honor. Their memorial has endured throughout the generations; for their brave deeds of faith, courage and sacrifice preserved the noble ethical and spiritual heritage of their people for mankind.

What have you omitted from your life? It is a searching question to ask yourself. Every one should ask himself that question, for no life is complete. Are you aware of some great omission, some gap, some void? Are you afraid that your life ^{too} is adding up to a lap-full of wild gourds, from which the little handful of meal is missing which alone can neutralize the harmful poisons? Do you find yourself, though living in a world of plenty, steadily growing empty, drained, and drifting -- drifting into a psychic *malaise* of listlessness or into an even more dangerous mood of frustration, cynicism or misanthrophy?

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For the Lord will be your confidence.

^{Wherein} ~~Why~~ is the difference in their confidences
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The author of the Book of Proverbs believes that the
key-way of wisdom is Reverence for God - who
and sees in the as to preserve, doing good in the
world:

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THE TEMPLE

CLEVELAND, OHIO

December 10, 1961

Vol. XLVIII No. 9



Chanukah

Greetings

SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

December 10, 1961

10:30 o'clock

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER

will speak on

**IS THERE ANYTHING YOU HAVE OMITTED
FROM YOUR LIFE?**

Mr. Josef Gingold, Violinist, will join with
The Temple Choir in the musical portion
of the service.

FRIDAY EVENING SERVICES
5:30 TO 6:10

SATURDAY MORNING SERVICES
11:00 TO 12:00

The Temple

Rabbis:

ABBA HILLEL SILVER
DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

Associate Rabbi:

MILTON MATZ

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 Emeritus

MELVIN HAKOLA
Choir Director

DAVID GOODING
Organist

BERTRAM J. KROHNGOLDPresident
LEO W. NEUMARKVice-President
ELI GOLDSTONVice-President
MAX EISNERTreasurer
EDWARD D. FRIEDMANAssociate Treasurer

THIS SUNDAY

Mr. and Mrs. Julie Kravitz will be hosts for the Social Hall coffee hour preceding the worship service. Mr. Kravitz is a member of The Temple Board of Trustees.

The flowers which will grace the pulpit were contributed in memory of mother, Helene R. Himmel, and father, Louis H. Bachrach, by Mr. and Mrs. Leonard R. Himmel.

"FROM THE RABBI'S DESK"

An anthology of selections by Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver have been reprinted in book form. These articles, many of which were published originally in "From the Rabbis' Desk" comment informally on our national and religious life. This book is available through The Temple office at \$1.00 the copy.

ANNUAL COLLEGE HOMECOMING

On Sunday morning, December 31st, the Annual Homecoming Service will be held. Graduates of our Religious School will participate in the service and will attend a special Homecoming luncheon in the Social Hall. The young people will shortly receive invitations inviting them to this event.

If your college age son or daughter does not receive an invitation, it is due to the fact that we do not have the correct address. Please notify us and we will be glad to send out an invitation.

THE TEMPLE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION THE TEMPLE MEN'S CLUB

ANNUAL CHANUKAH MUSICALE

Sunday, December 10th

8:15 P.M.

Luntz Auditorium



WRHS "AN EVENING WITH JOSEF GINGOLD"

Josef Gingold, distinguished concert violinist and former Concertmaster of The Cleveland Orchestra, returns to The Temple for his first public appearance in Cleveland since accepting his new post as Professor of Music at Indiana University. His warm personality and superb artistry have won him many friends at The Temple. We welcome the opportunity to share our Annual Chanukah Musicale with him.

A social hour will follow

Admission by Temple Women's Association or Temple Men's Club membership card only

THE TEMPLE WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION

MANY THANKS

The great success of the two book reviews given by Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver makes the month of November a high spot in the program of The Temple Women's Association.

MANY THANKS and much credit go to our Rabbi Daniel Silver for his reviews and to Dorothy and Reuben Silver, who did the readings; to the Chairmen of the Day, Mrs. Victor Wise, Mrs. Alfred Brock, and Mrs. Everett Jarrett; to the Chairmen of the Hospitality Committee, Mrs. Alvin Arsham and Mrs. Morton Smith; to the Chairman of Hostesses, Mrs. Joel Garver; to the Chairmen of Decoration, Mrs. David Simon and Mrs. Donald Spitz; and to the Chairmen of Publicity, Mrs. Morton Epstein and Mrs. Gilbert Stein; and a special thank you to all those members of The Temple Women's Association who worked so hard and unstintingly to plan these meetings and to make them so successful.

FROM THE RABBIS' DESK



"If I am for myself alone" was the theme of The Temple High School all day retreat at the Executive Club. Seventy-eight students took part in an active schedule of seminar, lecture discussion, athletic and social activity.

The day began with Sabbath worship and ended in the darkened lounge in front of a crackling fire with Havdalah.



Man's responsibility for the social welfare of others was the constant theme, and the day was balanced with swimming, ice skating, and a sidewalk cafe. Like the high schoolers, you too would have enjoyed being there.

Milton Matz

P.S. The pictures by Kenneth Gilman tell the story of the day.



The Temple Bulletin
THE TEMPLE
UNIVERSITY CIRCLE AT SILVER PARK
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DATES TO REMEMBER

- Sunday, December 10 — Sunday Morning Services
Temple Women's Association - Temple Men's Club Chanukah Musicale
- Tuesday, December 12 — Temple Women's Association Tuesday Activities
- Sunday, December 17 — Sunday Morning Services

THE TEMPLE LIBRARY is open Tuesday through Friday 9:00 A.M. to 5:30 P.M., Saturday 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon, and Sunday 9:00 A.M. to 10:30 and at the close of Sunday morning worship.

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 Activities sessions. Selections can be made at all times from the display case in the lobby through The Temple office.