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New Year, 1934.

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NEW YEARS! 5695
Abba Hillel Silver

We are assembled again, my friends, solemnly and prayerfully to welcome the coming of a new year. It is a custom among other peoples to welcome the new year with great merriment and festivities, as if the new year presaged some great happiness which the old year denied. The custom of our people, however, is to meet the new year in a more sombre mood, and it is dictated, I believe, by a sterner realism and a larger wisdom. א' תתקל"ד ביום מחר כולך תרץ מה ילך ה' ^א

"Glory not in to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Furthermore, each new year marks the passage of time and time is one reality which man has never mastered. All that lives lives in the tide of time, and the tide of time relentlessly carries all living things on to the ultimate sea of oblivion. No one can contemplate the swift trajectory of human life from birth to death traced upon the plane of time without sensing the profound pathos which the Psalmist felt when he uttered his moving threnody on life:

"The days of our life are three score ^{years} and ten and even by reason of strength four-score years. Yet in their pride but travail and vanity, for it is speedily gone and we fly away."

Because life is so brief and our days pass so quickly, each recurrent new year comes to us with a call at once sobering and minatory. Son of Man! *it is, as if, I called unto us from some watch-tower of Time*
To what use are you putting the few precious years allotted to you before the light of your life is quenched in darkness and your body sinks into unremembered dust? Your life is an island, a small meagre island, washed by the sea of eternity. Soon its dark waters will sweep over and engulf it. What are you planting there, O, Son of Man? And what are you harvesting there?

Thus our new year, far from being a day of thoughtless revelry, is a day of self-searching and reflection, a day of admonition touching the preciousness

of each ^{hurry} passing hour and the high uses to which ^{it} they should be put.

The ^{great} wise Roman emperor and philosopher, Marcus Aurelius, said: "Time is a sort of river of passing events, and strong is its current; no sooner is a thing brought to sight than it is swept by and another takes its place, and this too will be swept away."

Strong is its current! I venture to say that no generation of men has ever had reason to grasp more fully the truth of this observation more than ours. How strong has the current of events been in our life-time! How swift has been the movement of great historic processes in our day! How sudden and sharp have been the changes in our political, social and economic life! Hardly a day passes but what some startlingly new event transpires in our national or international^{al} life which tears and wrenches at our ^{established} habits of thought and conduct and forces us to a new orientation. The speed of events has simply outrun our capacity to yoke, collar and bridle them to our comprehension. We are utterly confused by the power and tumult of the onrushing life about us. The orderly processes of life to which the last generation ^{was} had accustomed itself have been thrust aside by tidal waves of revolutionary experimentation in government, in economics, and in morals. Hardly a spot in the Western World that is not seething today with agitation, that is not a whirlpool of unrest. Hardly a government in the Western World today that is not dangerously poised on the edge of an abyss. The only peaceful spots ^{left} in the world today are the backward lands of peoples still primitive which have not been poisoned with the virus of civilization.

The doctrines of Fascism and Communism have turned the world into a battlefield arraying nation against nation and class against class. The economic struggle has turned its back upon parliamentary methods of peaceful solution and has chosen the desperate arbitrament of force, terror and annihilation. The countries which are still democratic are harrassed by economic distress, by

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vast unemployment, by the hard-driven necessity to resort to unsettling and radical experiments in an effort to save their national economies² from utter collapse. Strikes, riots, bloodshed are daily occurrences.

Strong is the current! Not only events but ideas, too, have been rolling in upon us, turbulent and overwhelming. Long-habituated ideas, long-established convictions, sanctified by age into unquestioned dogmas, have been challenged, flaunted, exposed, and in many parts of the world outlawed. Freedom, liberty, the inalienable rights of man, peace, brotherhood, internationalism -- all of these postulates of our social life for more than a century and a half are now violently rejected by nations and classes, and ruthlessly trampled under foot, and those who exterminate them ^{not only} proudly justify themselves and claim to be the ^{but ask} regarded as the heroes and saviors of mankind. Theories of government and society which we thought had been buried deep in the tomb of the dark ages, have risen from the dead and in their ghastly ceremonies are ~~now~~ again haunting the habitations of men.

And yet, in spite of this ^{universal} disorder and recession, never has man's mind and intellect been more creative and more abundantly inventive than in our generation. Science has been making gigantic strides in invention, ^{and} discovery, in the realms of physics, chemistry, biology, engineering and medicine. Hardly a day passes but what some new machine is perfected, some new knowledge unearthed, some new power added to man's conquest of the physical world. The great pageant of the Century of Progress which the American people witnessed in the last two years in Chicago in so far as its scientific displays ^{is} ~~is~~ concerned, is really the amazing pageant of the achievement of our own generation, of our own day. And yet this very remarkable development of science and invention has begun to fill the hearts of men with fear and dismay. The human race had

A few days ago - Sir Josiah Stamp, a director of the Bank of England, had, the London Midland Scottish Railway ^{the} members of the British Assoc. for the advancement of Science - convening

long hoped that scientific progress and invention would make human life easier, happier, and more secure. Science was to save the world from all the ^{poverty and misery} evils of the dark ages. But life today is not easier or happier or more secure. The machine which was once regarded as man's mechanical servant and ally is now by many regarded as his implacable enemy -- displacing him and consigning him to pauperized idleness. Ten millions are unemployed in our country alone. Men want to work but are denied access to the machines upon which they have been taught and trained to depend. Science has reared huge industrial and commercial cities and filled them with unspeakable slums and poverty. Science has taught us how to increase the yield of our soil so that the human race may enjoy more abundantly the food of the earth. Yet the economy which the scientific age has produced now dictates the wholesale destruction of crops and live stock in order to create an artificial scarcity. Science far from uniting the human race and achieving human solidarity such as the great new inventions of transportation and communication had promised, has actually converted the world into an armed camp, and the most skillful and cunning inventions of the laboratory are ^{exploited by munition manufacturers and are being} being employed in the military establishments of the world to kill and destroy men by land, ^{and} on sea and ~~in~~ the air.

"Time is a sort of river of passing events, and strong is its current." For our generation the current has been strong and swift and headlong, and the river of passing events has been choked to overflowing and roiled and muddied. *(Mr)*

How does all this affect the average individual? Why, it leaves him bewildered. It gives him a ^{desperate} sense of insecurity which is the mother of fear. He cannot plan hopefully for his future or the future of his children for he

does not know ^{p/1 3/11 7/11} what revolutionary changes to-morrow may bring forth. His capital is insecure. His job is insecure. The very system under which he lives seems to be insecure.

It is in such times as these ^{my friends} that a man needs a strong and steady philosophy of life. Else he becomes hopelessly demoralized and is in danger of going under. It is when the current of events is very strong and threatening that a man needs ^{to put} the steady hands of a strong purpose and a sure faith upon the oars to keep his boat in the safe channel. Some call it a philosophy of life. Others a religious faith. What difference does it make? The important thing is to have an outlook, a perspective which will enable a man first, to relate what is happening now, at this moment, in this generation, to what has gone before and ^{may} will come after -- to a general trend of human progress; and secondly, to relate himself to what is happening. The first will help him to become less fearful and impatient. The second will ^{make} help him to feel less helpless and ^{unimportant,} overwhelmed.

Our religion teaches us to put our faith in God in time of trouble. ^{אין אלהים, אין עולם} "Above the voices of many waters, the mighty breakers of the sea, the Lord as high is mighty." ^(Ps. 93)

Translated into less theologic terms it means that man should remember in his hour of trouble and confusion that what is happening about him is not chaos but the hard and steady unfoldment of a plan which will ultimately make human life more free, more secure, and more happy. ^{the man of faith} The man of faith believes that there is an intelligent purpose manifest in the slow, often painful processes of history. ^{The birth} Every new era is attended by birth pangs -- the ^{p/1 1/11 1/11} What, therefore, we see before us today is not merely an old world dying but a new world being born. "The old order changeth, yielding place to new." Economic and social systems pass through cycles of growth and decay just like living organisms. Our generation finds itself at the close of such a cycle.

This does not ~~mean~~ ^{shall} the end of all things, but the beginning of a new cycle which in many ways will resemble the old and in other ways will be different. The extent of the changes which will come over our social life no one can foresee or estimate. The romantics and the perfectionists who are dreaming of Kingdom Come will be disappointed -- as they always must be. So will the reactionaries and conservatives who yearn after that which is now passing beyond recall.

The masses of the earth ^{be harmoniously and continuously, in all sorts of good, material and cultural.} Changes are coming over the face of the world. We live in the midst of these changes and therefore our lives are far less tranquil than the lives of those who preceded us. But there is no ground for pessimism or dismay. Out of the travail of ^{our} an age a better and juster social order will emerge. It is for us who have been singled out by destiny to live in such a vital and critical era of social reconstruction to prove ourselves worthy of the challenge of the hour, ^{let it not be said of us that we have found us, as it were, in the path of the future.} We are at the cross-roads of history. The future course of our country will be determined largely by what we of this generation do. If we bring courage, vision, hope, tolerance, sacrifice to the solution of the grave economic problems of our day, to the task of building the new day, blessed will be our role in history and blessed will be the lives of those who are to follow us. If, however, in hardness of heart and short-sightedness, we bring to their solution a meanness of spirit, a cowardly fear, a blind and deaf orthodoxy, and a secret hope of preserving by force what life has ^{condemned} decreed shall be destroyed, then our role will be that of obstructionists whom life will destroy and history will condemn. New Year

^{We shall} Let us face our hard days manfully, and work, ^{not} not in the spirit of one attempting to save ^{and his possession} himself from a universal wreckage, but of one who, ^{together} together with all other men of faith and good will, confidently builds for the Day of Better Things.

Joshua.

and the Lord be with you
Be strong and of good courage, be not afraid, nor dismayed.

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See! in the rocks of the world
 Marches the host of mankind,
 A feeble, wavering line.
 Where are they tending? -- A God
 Marshalled them, gave them their goal.
 Ah, but the way is so long!
 Years they have been in the wild!
 Sore thirst plagues them, the rocks,
 Rising all round, overawe;
 Factions divide them, their host
 Threatens to break, to dissolve.
 --Ah, keep, keep them combined!
 Else of the myriads who fill
 That army, not one shall arrive;
 Sole they shall stray; in the rocks
 Stagger forever in vain,
 Die one by one in the waste.



Man needs an outlook today and a perspective to relate also himself to
 the world about him. Man must learn how to associate himself with the world
 about him but also how to abstract himself from it. He must learn how to transcend
 it. He must be able to say: ^{Many strange and} Things are happening all about me -- and many ^{important} things
 are happening to me -- failure, poverty, disillusion, strife, But I will not let
 them engulf me. I will rise above them. I am more than they are. I have an
 impregnable castle in my inner self ^{world} which they cannot storm. There I ^{will} live
 my real life of quiet, ^{regardless of what happens,} dignity and independence. Into it I ^{will} invite my close ^{dear ones, my} friends.

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There in
 family circle, and my intimate friends. There is my true world of love and
 of memories and hopes. will I live and
 friendship, of abiding joy and interest. From it, as from an ivory tower, I will
 but I will not be dislodged from it.
 scan the swiftly moving scene about me. The material evils which befall me I will
 not permit to ravage ^{that} inner sanctuary of mine. It is hard to grow poor
 when old. I know how hard it is. I know how hard it is
 It is hard to be young with no prospects. It is hard to see one's
 cherished ideals trampled under foot. I have lost so much of what I believed for.
 But my own inner world which I have build-
 for myself against just such a day of wrath and trouble is still mine, swept
 and garnished and fragrant as of old. This is what the Psalmist meant when
 he said: עַל דַּאָת וַתִּפְּלֵי כֵן חֲסִיד אֱלֹהִים לֵצַח מִצָּח רַק לְשִׁשָּׁף מִיָּב
 עַל דֵּם אֱלֹהִים אֵין יָגִיל

"For this let every pious man pray unto Thee: When the time of testing comes,
 when the great waters overflow, may they not reach unto him." - with his ^{inner} self.

Thither will I repair in any day of trouble and thence
 will I abide, sovereign, free, and unbroken, as of yore.

- With such a ~~faith~~ philosophy of life, my friends, ^{essential}
 with such a faith in human destiny and in our ^{own}
 worth and independence we can face the ^{coming}
 years, ^{unafraid and when a new year comes around we can}
 wish each other and all men good
 will - a happy, yea, a happier New Year!

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(Marcus Aurelius)

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Matthew Arnold
Rugby Chapel.

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