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Where is God? New Year, 1940.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVIL

A sermon delivered for the Jewish
New Year, 1940, *the Temple*

Frequently during the last few years, and more especially during the last few months, I have heard men say: "Where is God?" Men of faith everywhere are being accosted today by the same petulant query with which the Psalmist of old was accosted:

א'י'i'c' . "Where is thy God?"

Logically, of course, one had the right to assume that now, least of all, men would ask such a question. Witnessing the violent tragedy of death and destruction which mankind brought upon itself, by its own depravity, one had the right to assume that men would turn to God with increased faith and fervor, and acknowledge the complete vindication of Him and of His moral law. But men are seldom logical when they are hurt, baffled and unhappy.

When they are prosperous they do not worry much about God or His existence. They do not say, to quote Jeremiah, "Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt and that led us through wilderness... that brought us into a land of fruitful fields." Prosperity and well-being are taken for granted, as man's just mete and due. What they possess and enjoy, singly or collectively, they tacitly assume to be the results of their own achievements and entirely due to their own merit. "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth."...

It is when they are hurt, bereaved or helpless that many people become rebellious, cavilling and demanding, "Where is God?" Why does He allow this? Why does he not intervene? The power which they did not invoke gratefully in their prosperity they cavil at fretfully in their adversity.

The truth of the matter is, of course, not that God has forsaken the world, but that the world has forsaken God, and that the ancient admonition has again come true: "And it shall be if thou shalt forget the Lord Thy God and walk after other gods, and serve them, I forewarn ye this day that ye shall surely perish."... Our world is perishing before our very eyes because the moral law of the living God was contemned by our generation. Never has retributive justice overtaken an age as swiftly and as surely as our age. Never has the law of divine compensation been so completely and dramatically vindicated.

If our days are shot through with agony and despair, if war stalks through the fair cities and lands of the earth, if death rains from the skies and if the four dread, gaunt Horsemen of the Apocalypse are again riding through the world - is it not due to the gross and unpardonable sins of our age, to the acts of betrayal, perfidy and selfishness on the parts of governments, leaders, parties and masses?

The last war was a bloody atonement for wide and universal international crimes. At its conclusion, after more than four years of massacre and horror, nations resolved upon repentance. They pledged themselves to put an end to the era of political intrigue and rival national sovereignties and to establish a new order - one that would be built upon righteousness and upon respect for the right of all nations and of all minorities. In their chastened mood, they set up institutions and agencies for the peaceful solution of all international conflicts and for collective punishment of any aggressor. A new day had dawned for mankind. International aggression and war were to be things of the past, like slavery. Hopes ran high. Bright trumpets sounded on new horizons.

But it was not long before the new altars which had been erected by a repentant world to the new vision which had come to it, were defiled by the very hands which had erected them. As they moved away from the battle-fields where they had known agony, soul-searching and repentance, the nations returned to their old vomit, to the old international rivalries, injustices and shameless schemes of conquest. The promising new world order was destroyed by the nations which had created it. They scuttled the League of Nations. They undermined collective security. They refused to protect at the behest of their own pledges and covenants the weaker nations against aggression, and minorities against persecution. The long sordid record of twenty years of moral evasion and hypocrisy culminating in the second world war need not be rehearsed here. It is all too well known. The statesmen of the victorious nations of Europe failed to see, because they were spiritually blind, that the same unpunished and unchecked lawlessness which could bomb cities and civilians in China or Ethiopia could some-day also bomb their own cities and kill their own civilians. They did not see because they would not see that the same unchallenged and uncurbed barbarism which looted the Jews of Germany, crushed and robbed them, and drove them forth as helpless refugees could some-day loot and rob their own citizens and drive out millions of their own people, Christians and so-called Aryans, as homeless refugees. The nationally redeemed Poles, in the stupidity of their national arrogance and intolerance, thought that only Jews could be declared sub-human, branded As pariahs and forced to wear the yellow badge of serfdom. Such a fate could never overtake them. Frenchmen thought that only Czechoslovakia could be over-run and conquered. Englishmen never dreamed that their own children might some-day have to seek asylum in far distant lands, and the

ships carrying their refugee children would some day be sunk by the same Nazis whose fury and madness was scattering helpless Jewish children over the face of the earth. Each thought only of himself. And so the God of nations, the God of universal law and justice, meted out to all of them a common cup of staggering and confusion from which they must all drink now.

Similarly with the nations which lost in the last war. They were not content to seek merely redress and restitution; nor were they prepared to repent of their share in the crimes which hurled them and others into the last disastrous war. When circumstances came to favor them, their old and for a time thwarted lust for conquest and domination and military glory reasserted itself. Like the dervishes of old, like hysterical shamans, they whipped themselves into an orgy of emotional patriotic abandon and stripped themselves of all the decencies of civilized life. They danced the wild, unrestrained dance of folk pride, of chauvenism and racism. Blindly they cast aside their liberties and their humanities and rushed out, in a berserk rage, upon the world, to trample, to conquer and to subdue. They thought that only Madrid, Warsaw and London could be bombed, never Berlin or Munich or Frankfurt.

And if these peoples are suffering today from war, and have begun to count their wounded and slain in the tens of thousands, if they have come to know want and scarcity and the biting chill of the chains of serfdom which have been riveted upon them, if they have come to experience mounting physical and spiritual deprivations for which the trumped-up glories of tentative victories won upon the battlefield are no adequate compensation, is it because there is no God in the world, or is it because these peoples set up or permitted to be set up in their midst false gods, whose altars clamor for human

sacrifice, and whose shrines, like that of the ancient Diana of Nemi, call for High Priests who are run-a-way slaves, who murder their predecessors in office and must in turn be murdered by their successors.

"They chose new gods; then was there war in the gates." When men forsake the God of truth and peace and worship the gods of lies and war, shall they not suffer in consequence and shall God be held unjust or indeed non-existent because He avenges His moral law?

There is a relentless exclusiveness to the loyalty which is demanded by God. It does not tolerate any competing loyalties. One can not worship God and at the same time worship also Mammon and Mars and Moloch and Pan - tribal and chthonian deities, whose essence is but the magnified frailties of mortal man. "Thou shalt have no other God beside Me." One must be either for God or for Baal. And our own age has been for Baal - for many cruel and deformed Baalim. And now the earth resounds with the death-cries of a perishing generation because these false gods have brought their worshipers to the very brink of self-annihilation.

Shall we now blame God Who, through the mouths of seers, prophets and sages, has warned men, betime and often, to abhor and to turn away from these false gods, not to covet the silver and gold that is upon them, and not to be ensnared by them, but to worship only Him, the God of justice, love and peace - the Father of all who loves all men, strong and weak alike, as His children, and Who commanded men and nations to take pity on the weak, to shelter the stranger, and to regard all men as brothers?

Where is God? Where, indeed! Men have torn him from their hearts. They

have banished him from their habitations, from their chancelleries and academies and from their marts of trade. And now God has returned to them in the consuming wrath and fire of retribution. He is chastising our age and purging it again. Perhaps this time the nations will learn not to condemn His law or deal lightly with His divine commandments. Perhaps in their common fellowship of suffering they will discover a common comradeship in arms to defend those common ethical and spiritual ends which are their common safety and which tolerate no exceptions. Then God will assuredly forgive and pardon, and He will return as dew to a parched land, as a healing and a balm. For God does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he should return and live...

Religion, my friends, never assumed, for a moment, that God created a perfect world for man and a perfect man to dwell in it. If that were so, creation would be altogether meaningless. It would have no history, and human life would be denied all struggle and therefore all achievement. Religious mythology did conceive of a paradise, but it placed it at the two extremes of human existence - at the very beginning and ~~end~~ at the very end. In the Garden of Eden, before man's fall, there was perfection; and at the "End of Days", in the golden millennium of messianic times, there will again be perfection. But in between these points, which are on the distant horizons of beginning and end, there stretches the long, hard road of man's slow evolution, the broken road which winds through a wilderness of disappointments and heart-breaks, but which alone leads man along its weary march, to experience, knowledge, wisdom, freedom and peace.

God did not create man or society perfect, but perfectible. He gave them a law by which to attain perfection, and a way of life by which to achieve

maximum happiness. As an antidote to the selfish inclinations which God has placed in the hearts of men, none altogether purposeless, He gave them the Law. If man chooses to ignore that Law, it is not God who fails man, but man who fails himself and God. It is not for God to make man's world perfect, but for man - to perfect his own world according to the Law revealed to him by God. God has left man largely free to fashion his own destiny and dowered him with the necessary measure of will, power and freedom to carve out a blessed destiny for himself. If man resolves to strive mightily and labor earnestly, he can achieve, so we have learned from experience, high levels of intellectual and spiritual perfection and reach high peaks of nobility and happiness.

But man must be willing to enter the struggle for perfection, to suffer and to sacrifice for righteousness, for the Kingdom of God, which is the Kingdom of his own blessedness. There is no other way to attain them. This is the condition of man's advancing life. This is the Law of human progress. Leaders of men, especially, must be prepared to set the example of sacrifice and suffering with fortitude for those ideals which alone can make life livable for men or nations. Jeremiah must be prepared to be stoned to death, Jesus to die upon the cross, and Socrates to drain the beaker of death. Such suffering is not punishment, but purification, not merely of those who suffer but of those for whom they suffer. It is in this sense that the Rabbis declared: "Blessed are suffering, for they atone like sacrificial offerings."

Wise men learn from suffering and are improved by it, like malleable iron which is hammered into greater strength by each falling blow. When the great teacher Akiba was asked to explain his dictum, "Blessed are the suffering",

he said: "Menasseh did that which was evil in the sight of God, although his royal and pious father, Hezekiah, had taught him the whole Torah and all the mandates of the good life. But all the teaching which he received did not influence him for good, but suffering did. As it is written: "Menasseh was bound in chains and carried into exile to Babylon and when he was in distress, ~~he~~ besought the Lord, and humbled himself greatly before God, and prayed unto God."

My friends: Many trials await our generation and much suffering. We may not be at the end of this world war, but at its beginning. The areas of conflict may widen. The tides of death and destruction are sweeping on and may engulf many more nations before they finally recede. We, of this generation, will do well to regard this universal calamity as God's visitation for the sins of our age. We will do well to think humbly of repentance and contrition. Also we will do well to be of strong faith and cling to the conviction of the faithful men of all times, that "while the Lord has chastened them sore He will not give them over unto death." We will be wise to gird ourselves morally for the great and long struggle ahead and be prepared to play a manly part in it; for it is better to die as free men for the Law of God than to live as slaves under the law of tyrants.

This hour, my friends, calls not for fear or doubt or despair, but for faith and valor and the buckling on of armor, both physical and spiritual. We are met in the Valley of Decision, and the hour is the hour of destiny. It is an eternal moment, when epochal decisions are being made which will affect the lives of generations of men yet unborn. The remaining free peoples of the earth must rally as one to slay the evil which threatens all mankind, the evil which they tolerated all too long and which they permitted to wax and grow mighty and ~~menacing~~ ^{menacing} because they were blind, because they had grown thick and gross, had forgotten the covenant of God, and had worshiped "new gods

that came up of late, and sacrificed unto demons and no-Gods."

We Jews who fought Moloch and Mammon and all savage and brutal Gods in' ancient days, in the name of a God of Justice and Love, and throughout the ages, have suffered, as we are suffering today, because we were called by His name, must again find our places in the vanguard of the free armies of mankind, and fight, with invincible courage, all the bloody priests of Baalim today, all those who breathe hate and war, who would deny man his divine patrimony of freedom and dignity, who would divide the human race into men and mongrels, and who would wield the whips of the taskmasters over an enslaved world.

And it is only through faith in God, a living, nourishing faith that we can win through. Because our age was cynical, so-called realistic and practical, but actually afraid and common-place, because it had neither lift, nor vision, nor aspiring faith, that it went stumbling from one disaster to another and finally ended up on the edge of a wilderness.

Democracy without a conquering faith in a living God of Justice and Freedom cannot win against the powerful forces which are today arrayed against it. It must confront Baal with ^{Yahweh} Yahaveh. Democracy was born in faith, grew strong in faith, and must die when it loses that faith. It will have no spiritual resources upon which to draw, no enkindling loyalty, no vision, and without vision a free people must perish.

If our faith in God and in His moral law can be revived, a faith in and allegiance to a Power that is greater than the State or any and all forms of human organization and authority, then we shall come to know beyond the peradventure of doubt that no human, despotism and cruelty and hate and the destruction of the weak can triumph in the end, and we shall then find the courage with which to challenge them, the means wherewith to destroy them, and the strength to endure until the victory is won.

*good - they put us in a better world
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no exclusive loyalty -8-

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4
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Sermon, The Temple, Rosh Hashanah, 1940

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[the fair cities and lands of the earth, if death rains from the skies and if the four dread, gaunt Horsemen of the Apocalypse are again riding through the world, is it not due to the gross and unpardonable sins of our age, to the acts of betrayal, perfidy, and selfishness of governments, leaders, parties, and masses?

The last war was a bloody atonement for wide and universal crimes. After more than four years of massacre and horror, nations resolved upon repentance. They pledged themselves to put an end to the era of political intrigue and national rivalry and to establish a new order, one that would be built upon righteousness and upon respect for the right of all nations and of all minorities. In their chastened mood they set up institutions and agencies for the peaceful solution of international conflicts and for collective punishment of any aggressor. A new day had dawned for ~~the~~ mankind. Like slavery, international aggression and war were to be things of the past. Hopes ran high. Bright trumpets sounded on new horizons.

But it was not long before the new altars which had been erected by a repentant world were defiled by the very hands which had erected them. As the nations moved away from the battlefields where they had known agony, soul-searching, and repentance, they returned to ~~the~~ former rivalries and shameless schemes of conquest. The promising new world order was destroyed by the ~~same~~ nations which had created it. They scuttled the League of Nations. They undermined collective security. They refused to ^{obey} ~~protect~~ ~~at~~ the behest of their own pledges and covenants ^{to protect} the weaker nations against ~~the~~ aggression, and minorities against persecution. The long sordid record of twenty years of moral evasion and hypocrisy culminating in the second world war need not be rehearsed here. It is all too well known. The statesmen of the victorious nations failed to see, because they were spiritually blind, that the same unchecked and unpunished lawlessness which could bomb cities and civilians in China or Ethiopia could someday bomb their own cities and kill their own ~~citizens~~ citizens. They did not see, because they would not see, that the same unchallenged and uncurbed barbarism which crushed and robbed the Jews of Germany, and drove them forth as helpless refugees could someday loot ~~the~~ and rob their own citizens and

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drive out millions of their own people, Christians and so-called Aryans, as homeless refugees. The Poles, in the stupidity of their national arrogance and intolerance, thought ^{that} only ~~Jews~~ Jews could be declared sub-human, branded as pariahs and forced to wear the yellow badge of serfdom. Frenchmen thought that only Czechoslovakia could be overrun and conquered. Englishmen never dreamed that their children might someday have to seek asylum in far distant places nor that the ships carrying their ~~children~~ children to refuge would someday be sunk by the same Nazis whose fury and madness was scattering helpless Jewish children over the face of the earth. Each thought only of himself. And the God of nations, the God of universal law and justice, meted out to all of them a common cup of staggering confusion from which they must now drink.

Similarly the nations which ^{had} lost in the last war were not content to seek merely redress and restitution; nor were they prepared to repent of their share in the crimes which ^{had} hurled them and others into conflict. When circumstances came to favor them, their old and for a time thwarted lust for conquest and domination and military glory reasserted itself. Like the dervishes of old, like hysterical shamans, they whipped themselves into an orgy of emotional patriotism and stripped themselves of all the decencies of ~~modern~~ civilized life. They danced the wild, unrestrained dance of folk pride, of chauvenism and racism. Blindly they cast aside their liberties and their humanities and rushed out, in a berserk rage, upon the world, to trample, to conquer, and to subdue. Madrid, Warsaw, and London could be bombed, never Berlin, Munich, or Frankfort.

If these peoples are suffering today, and have begun to count their wounded and slain in the tens of thousands, if they know want and scarcity and the biting chill of the chains of serfdom which have been riveted upon them, if they experience mounting physical and spiritual deprivations for which the trumped-up glories of battle-field victories are no adequate compensation, is it because there is no God in the world? Or is it ^{because} ^{have} that these peoples set up in their midst false gods, whose altars clamor for human

sacrifice, and whose shrines, like that ^o if ancient Diana of Nemi, call for High Priests who are runaway slaves, who murder their predecessors and must in turn be murdered by their successors? "They chose new gods; then there was war in the gates." When men forsake the God of truth and peace and worship the gods of ~~MM~~ lies and war, shall they not suffer the consequences? Shall ~~MM~~ God be held unjust or, indeed, non-existent, because He avenges His moral law?

There is a ~~MM~~ relentless exclusiveness to the loyalty which is demanded by God. One cannot worship God and at the same time also worship Mammon, Mars, Moloch, or Pan, tribal and chthonian dieties, whose essence is but the magnified frailties of mortal man. "Thou shalt have no other gods beside Me". One must be either for God or for Baal. Our own age has been for Baal ¹/_m for many cruel and deformed Baalim. And now our earth resounds with the death cries of a perishing generation whose false gods have brought their worshippers to the brink of self-annihilation.

Shall we now blame God, Who, has warned men, betimes and often, to abhor and to turn away from such false gods, not to covet the silver and gold that is upon them, and not to be ensnared by them? Shall we now blame God, Who has commanded ~~MM~~ man to worship only Him, the God of justice, love, and peace, the Father of all, who loves all men, strong and weak alike, as His children, and ^{has} Who commanded men and nations to take pity on the weak, to shelter the stranger, and to regard all men as brothers?

Where is God? Where indeed! Men have torn Him from their hearts. They have banished Him from their habitations, from their ^E chancellories, their academies, and from their marts of trade. And now God has returned in the consuming wrath and fire of retribution. He is chastising our age and purging it again. Perhaps this time the nations will learn not to condemn His law or deal lightly with His divine commandments. Perhaps in their common fellowship of suffering they will discover a common comradeship of purpose to defend those common ethical and spiritual ends which are their common safety and which tolerate no exceptions. Then God will assuredly forgive and pardon, and He will return as dew to a parched ^{land} ~~land~~, as a healing and a

balm. "For God does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he should return and live." ✓

Religion never assumed that God ^{had} created a perfect world for man to dwell in. If that were so, creation would be altogether meaningless. Creation would have no history, and human life would be denied all struggle and therefore all achievement. Religious mythology did conceive of a paradise, but it placed it at the ~~XX~~ two extremes of human existence ^{at} at the beginning and at the very end. In the Garden of Eden, before man's fall, there was perfection; and at the "End of days", in the golden millennium of messianic times, there will again be perfection. In between these points, which are on the distant horizons, there ~~XXX~~ stretches the long, hard road of man's slow evolution, the broken road which winds through a wilderness of disappointments and heartbreaks, ^{which} but alone leads man along its weary march, to experience, knowledge, wisdom, freedom, and peace.

Start:

God did not create man or society perfect, but perfectible. He gave men a law by which to attain perfection, and a way of life by which to achieve happiness. As an antidote to the selfish inclinations which He has placed in the hearts of men, none altogether purposeless, God gave man the Law. If man chooses to ignore that Law, it is not God who fails man, but man who fails himself and God. It is not for God ~~to~~ to make man's world perfect, but for man to perfect his own world according to the Law revealed to him by God. God has left man largely free to fashion his destiny and ^{has} dowered him with the necessary measure of will and freedom to carve out a blessed destiny for himself. If man resolves to strive mightily and labor earnestly, he can achieve, so we have learned from experience, high levels of intellectual and spiritual perfection and reach ~~new~~ peaks of nobility and happiness.

But man must be willing to enter the struggle for perfection and to suffer and to sacrifice for righteousness. There is no other way to attain the Kingdom of God, which is the Kingdom of man's own blessedness. This is the condition of man's advancing life. This is the law of human progress. Leaders of men, especially, must be prepared to set the example of sacrifice and fortitude. Jeremiah ~~M~~

gal 132
must be prepared to be stoned to death, Jesus to die upon the cross, and Socrates to drain the beaker of death. Such suffering is not punishment, but purification, not merely of those who suffer but of those for whom they suffer. It is in this sense that the rabbis declared: "Blessed are sufferings, for they atone like sacrificial offerings."

Wise men learn from suffering and are improved by it, like malleable iron which is hammered into greater strength by each falling blow. ^{when} Akiba was asked to explain his dictum, "Blessed are sufferings", and he said: "Menasseh did that which was evil in the sight of God, although his royal and pious father, Hezekiah, had taught him the whole Torah and all the mandates of the good life. All the teaching which he received did not influence ^{his} for good, but suffering did. As it is written: 'Menasseh was bound in chains and carried into exile ~~XX~~ to Babylon and when he was in distress, he besought the Lord, and humbled himself greatly before God, and prayed unto God.'"

Many trials await our generation and much suffering. We may not be at the end of this world war, but at its beginning. The areas of conflict may widen. The tides of death and destruction are sweeping ^{on} and may engulf other nations before they finally recede. We will do well to regard this universal calamity as God's visitation for the sins of our age. We will do well to think humbly of repentance and contrition. We will do well to be of strong faith and cling to the conviction of the faithful men of all times, that "while the Lord has chastened them sore He will not give them over unto death." We will be wise to gird ourselves morally for the ~~XXXX~~ great and long struggle ahead and be prepared to play a manly part in it, for it is better to die as free men ~~XXXX~~ for the Law of God, than to live as slaves under the law of tyrants.

not
This hour calls for fear or doubt or despair, but for faith and valor and the buckling on of armor, both physical and spiritual. We are met in the Valley of Decision, and the hour is the hour of destiny. It is an eternal moment, when epochal decisions are being made which will affect the lives of generations yet unborn.

The remaining free peoples of the earth must rally ~~as~~ as one to slay the evil which threatens all mankind, the evil which they tolerated all too long and which they permitted to wax and grow mighty and menacing because they were blind, because they had grown thick and gross, had forgotten the covenant of God, and had worshipped "new gods that came up of late, and sacrificed unto demons and no-gods."

We Jews who fought all the savage and brutal gods of ancient days, in the name of a God of justice and love; we Jews who have suffered throughout the ages as we are suffering today, because we were called by His name, must again find our places in the vanguard of the free armies of mankind, and fight, with invincible courage the bloody priests of the Baalim, all those who breathe hate and war, who would deny man his divine patrimony of freedom and dignity, who would divide the human ~~in~~ race into men and mongrels, and who would wield the whips of the taskmasters over an enslaved world.

Because our age ^{has been} was cynical, so-called realistic and practical, but actually afraid and ^{was} ~~common~~plac^oe, because it had neither lift nor ~~any~~ vision nor ~~any~~ ^{has} ~~aspiring~~ faith, it ^{has gone} ~~went~~ stumbling from one disaster to another and finally ended up ~~in~~ on the edge of a wilderness. It is only through faith in God, a living nourishing faith, that we can win through.

Democracy without a conquering faith in a living God of justice and freedom cannot win against the powerful forces which are arrayed against it. It must confront Baal with Yahveh. Democracy was born in faith, grew strong in faith, and must die when it loses that faith. Democracy ~~without~~ faith has no spiritual resources upon which to draw, no enkindling loyalty, no vision, and without vision a free people must perish.

If our ^{fa} ~~faith~~ in God and in His moral law can be revived, a faith in and allegiance to a Power that is ^{greater than} greater than the state, or any or all forms of human organization and authority, then we shall come to know beyond the peradventure of doubt that human despotism and cruelty and hate and the destruction of the weak cannot triumph in the end, and we shall find the courage ~~with which~~ to challenge evil, the means wherewith to destroy evil, and the strength to endure until the victory is won.

some - by far the most interesting
RH 1940

RE-TYPED

Where is God?

- 1 -

Paul Nathan 1940

Estad
C.R.

Frequently during the last few years, and more especially during the last few months, I have heard men say: "Where is God?" Men of faith everywhere are being accosted today by the same petulant query with which the Psalmist of old was accosted:

27th 21st . "Where is thy God?"

Logically, of course, one had the right to assume that now, least of all, men would ask such a question. Witnessing the violent tragedy of death and destruction which mankind brought upon itself, by its own depravity, one had the right to assume that men would turn to God with increased faith and ~~for~~ and acknowledge the complete vindication of Him and of His moral law. But men are seldom logical when they are hurt, baffled and unhappy. ^{TP} When they are prosperous they do not worry much about God or His existence. They do not say, to quote Jeremiah, "Where is the Lord that brought us up out of the land of Egypt and that led us through wilderness... that brought us into a land of fruitful fields." Prosperity and well-being are taken for granted, as man's just mete and due. What they possess and enjoy, singly or collectively, ¹⁵ are tacitly assumed to be the results of their own achievements and entirely due to their own merit. "My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth."...

It is when they are hurt, bereaved or helpless that many people become rebellious, cavilling and demanding, "Where is God?" Why does He allow this? Why does he not intervene? The power which they did not invoke gratefully in their prosperity they cavil at fretfully in their adversity.

The truth of the matter is, ^{not} of course, not that God has forsaken the world, but ~~that~~ the world has forsaken God ~~and that~~ the ancient admonition has again come true: "And it shall be if thou shalt forget the Lord Thy God and walk after other gods, and serve them, I forewarn ye this day that ye shall surely perish."... Our world is perishing before our very eyes because the moral law of the living God has been condemned by our generation. Never has retributive justice overtaken an age as swiftly and as surely as our age. Never has the law of divine compensation been so completely and dramatically vindicated.

If our days are shot through with agony and despair, if war stalks through the fair cities and lands of the earth, if death rains from the skies and if the four dread, gaunt Horsemen of the Apocalypse are again riding through the world - is it not due to the gross and unpardonable sins of our age, to the acts of betrayal, perfidy and selfishness on the parts of governments, leaders, parties and masses?

The last war was a bloody atonement for wide and universal international crimes. At its conclusion, after more than four years of massacre and horror, nations resolved upon repentance. They pledged themselves to put an end to the era of political intrigue and rival national sovereignties and to establish a new order - one that would be built upon righteousness and upon respect for the right of all nations and of all minorities. In their chastened mood, they set up institutions and agencies for the peaceful solution of all international conflicts and for collective punishment of any aggressor. A new day had dawned for mankind. International aggression and war were to be things of the past, like slavery. Hopes ran high. Bright trumpets sounded on new horizons.

But it was not long before the new altars which had been erected by a repentant world to ~~the~~ new vision which had come to them, were defiled by the very hands which had erected them. As they moved away from the battlefields where they had known agony, soul-searching and repentance, the nations returned to their old vomit, to the old international rivalries, injustices and shameless schemes of conquest. The promising new world order was destroyed by the nations which had created it. They scuttled the League of Nations. They undermined collective security. They refused ~~in consequence at the behest of the unpledged and uncommitted~~ to protect the weaker nations against aggression, and minorities against persecution.

✓ The long sordid record of twenty years of moral evasion and hypocrisy culminating in the second world war need not be rehearsed here. It is all too well known. The statesmen of the victorious nations of Europe failed to see, because they were spiritually blind, that the same unpunished and unchecked lawlessness which ^{could} bomb cities and civilians in China or Ethiopia ^{also} would some-day bomb their own cities and

kill their own civilians. They did not see because they would not see that the same
unchallenged and uncurbed barbarism which looted the Jews of Germany, crushed and
 robbed them, and drove them forth as helpless refugees ^{who} would some-day loot and rob
 their own citizens and drive out millions of their own people, Christians and so-called
 Aryans, as homeless refugees. The nationally redeemed Poles, in the stupidity of
their national arrogance and intolerance, thought that only ~~the~~ ^{accursed} Jews ^{sub-human} could be branded
 as pariahs and forced to wear the yellow badge of serfdom. Such a fate could never
 overtake them. Frenchmen thought that only Czechoslovakia could be over-run and
 conquered. Englishmen never dreamed that their own children might some-day have to
 seek asylum in far distant lands, and ~~their~~ ^{the} ships carrying these ^{or} refugee children
 would ^{some day} be sunk by the same Nazis whose fury and madness was scattering helpless
 Jewish children over the face of the earth. Each thought only of himself. And so
the God of nations, the God of universal law and justice, meted out to all of them a
common cup of staggering and confusion. from which they must all ~~now~~ drink.

Similarly with the nations which lost in the last war. They were not content
to seek merely redress and restitution; ^{were prepared to} nor did they repent of their share in the
crimes which hurled them ^{into this} into the last disastrous war. When circumstances came to
favor them, their old and ^{for a time} thwarted lust for conquest, and ^{and military glory} domination reasserted itself.
Like the dervishes of old, like hysterical shamans, they whipped themselves into an
orgy of emotional patriotic abandon and stripped themselves of all the decencies of
civilized life. They danced the wild, unrestrained dance of folk-pride, and madness,
of chauvenism and racism. Blindly they cast aside their liberties and their humanities
and rushed out, in a berserk rage, upon the world, to trample, to conquer and to
subdue. ^{Warsaw} They thought that only Madrid, and London could be bombed, never
Berlin or Moscow or Frankfurt.

And if these peoples are suffering today from war, and have begun to count
their wounded and slain in the tens of thousands, if they have come to know want, and
scarcity and the biting chill of the chains of serfdom which have been riveted upon
 them, if they have come to experience ^{mounting} numerous physical and spiritual deprivations

for which the trumped-up glories of tentative victories won upon the battlefield are no adequate compensation, is it because there is no God in the world, or because ^{is it} these peoples have set up or permitted to be set up in their midst false gods, whose altars clamor for human sacrifice, and whose shrines, like that of the ancient Diana of Nemi, call for High Priests who are run-a-way slaves, ^{to} who murder their predecessors in office and ~~are in turn~~ ^{most to be} murdered ^{in turn} by their successors.

~~... and so on ...~~ "They chose new gods; then was there war in the gates." When men forsake the God of truth and peace and worship the gods of lies and war, shall they not suffer in consequence and shall God be held unjust or indeed non-existent because He avenges His moral law?

There is a relentless exclusiveness to the loyalty which is demanded by God. It does not tolerate any competing loyalties. One can not worship God and at the same time worship also Mammon and Mars and Moloch and Pan - ^{the} ~~tribal and chthonic~~ ^{tribal and chthonic} deities, [?] whose essence is but the magnified frailties of moral man. ~~... and so on ...~~ "Thou shalt have no other God beside Me." One must be either for God or for Baal. And our own age has been for Baal - for many cruel and deformed Baalim. And now the earth resounds with the death-cries of a perishing generation because these false gods have brought their worshipers to the very brink of self-annihilation.

Shall we now blame God Who, through the mouths of seers, prophets and sages, has warned men, betime and often, to abhor and to turn away from these false gods, not to covet the silver and gold that is ~~set~~ upon them, and not to be ensnared by them, but to worship only Him, the God of justice, love and peace - the Father of all ~~men~~ who loves all men, strong and weak alike, as His children, and Who commanded men and nations to take pity on the weak, and to shelter the stranger, and to regard all men as brothers?

^{Where, indeed!} Where is God? Men have torn Him from their hearts. They have banished Him from their habitations, from their chancelleries and academies and their marts of trade. And now God has returned to them in the consuming wrath and fire of retribution.

DISREGARD UNDERLINES

-5-

He is chastising our age and purging it again. Perhaps this time the nations will learn not to condemn His law ^{OR} and to deal lightly with His divine commandments.

Perhaps in their common fellowship of suffering they will discover a common comradeship in arms ^{to} defense ^d of those common ethical and spiritual ends ^{which are the common basis of all} which tolerate no exceptions. Then God will assuredly forgive and pardon, and He will return as dew to a parched land, as a healing and a balm. For God does not desire the death of the sinner, but that he should return and live...

Religion, ~~my friends~~, never assumed, for a moment, that God created a perfect world for man and a perfect man to dwell in it. If that were so, creation would be altogether meaningless. It would have no history, and human life would be denied all struggle and therefore all achievement. Religious mythology did conceive of a paradise, but it placed it at the two extremes of human existence - at the very beginning and at the very end. In the "Garden of Eden", before man's fall, there was perfection; and at the "End of Days", in the golden millennium of messianic times, there will again be perfection. But in between these points, ^{which are} on the distant horizons of beginning and end, there stretches the long, hard road of man's slow evolution, the broken road which winds through a wilderness of disappointments and heart-breaks, ^{but} and which ^{alone} leads man ^{through its} along the weary ^{to} ~~stadium~~ ^{Marches,} of experience to knowledge, and wisdom, and freedom and peace.

God did not create man or society perfect, but perfectible. He gave them a law by which to attain perfection, and a way of life by which to achieve maximum happiness. As an ^{antidote} ~~antidote~~ to the selfish inclinations which God has placed in the ~~none altogether perfect~~ hearts of men, He gave them the Law. If man chooses to ignore that Law, it is not God who fails man, but man who fails himself and God. It is not ^{for} God who is to make man's world perfect, but ~~it is~~ ^{is} for man ^{182 10/12 11/12 1/12} to perfect his own world according to the Law revealed to him by God. God has left man largely free to fashion his own destiny, and ^{endowed} ~~dowered~~ him with the necessary measure of will, power and freedom to ^{came out} ~~fashion~~ a blessed destiny for himself. ~~If man resolves to strive~~

so we have learned from experience

mightily and labor earnestly, he can achieve high levels of intellectual and spiritual perfection and reach high peaks of nobility and happiness.

But man must be willing to enter the struggle for his own perfection, to suffer and ~~to~~ sacrifice for righteousness, ~~and~~ for the Kingdom of God, which is the Kingdom of His own blessedness. There is no other way to attain them. This is the condition of man's advancing life. This is the Law of human progress. Leaders of men, especially, must be prepared to set the example of sacrifice and of suffering with fortitude for those ideals which alone can make life livable for men or nations. Jeremiah must be prepared to be stoned to death, Jesus to die upon the cross, and Socrates to drain the beaker of death. Such suffering is not punishment but purification, not merely of those who suffer but of those for whom they suffer. It is in this sense that the Rabbis declared: ^{12/10, 12/12, 17} "Blessed are suffering, for they atone like sacrificial offerings."

Wise men learn from suffering and are improved by it, like malleable iron which is hammered into greater strength by each falling blow. When the great teacher Akiba was asked to explain his dictum, "Blessed are the suffering", he said: "Menasseh did that which was evil in the sight of God, although his royal and pious father, Hezekiah, had taught him the whole Torah and all the mandates of the good life. But all the teaching which he received did not influence him for good, but suffering did."

As it is written: "Menasseh was bound in chains and carried into exile to Babylon and when he was in distress, he besought the Lord, and humbled himself greatly before God, and prayed unto God."

My friends: Many trials await our generation and much suffering. We ^{may} ~~are~~ not ^{be} at the end of this world war, but at its beginning. The areas of conflict ^{may} ~~will~~ widen. The tides of death and destruction are sweeping on and ^{may} ~~will~~ engulf many more nations before they finally recede. We, of this generation, will do well to regard this universal calamity as God's visitation for the sins of our age. We will do well to think humbly of repentance and contrition. Also we will do well to be ^{of} ~~be~~ strong faith and cling to the conviction of the faithful men of all times, that "while the Lord

has chastened them sore He will not give them over unto death." We will be wise to gird ourselves morally for the great and long struggle ahead and be prepared to play a manly part in it; for it is better to die as free men for the Law of God than to live as slaves under the law of tyrants.

This hour, (my friends,) calls not for fear or doubt or despair, but for faith and valor and the buckling on of armor, both physical and spiritual. (We are met in the Valley of Decision, and the hour is the hour of destiny. It is an eternal moment, when epochal decisions are being made which will affect the lives of generations of men yet unborn. The remaining free peoples of the earth must rally as one to slay the evil which threatens all mankind, the evil which they tolerated all too long and which they permitted to wax and grow mighty and menacing because they were blind, because they had grown thick and gross, had forgotten the covenant of God, and had worshiped "new gods that came up of late, and sacrificed unto demons and no-Gods."

We Jews who fought Moloch and Mammon and all savage and brutal gods in ancient days, in the name of a God of Justice and Love, and throughout the ages, have suffered, as we are suffering today, ^{because} we were called by His name, must again find our places in the vanguard of the free armies of mankind, and fight, with invincible courage, all the bloody priests of Baalim today, ^{breath the hate and war who} all those who would deny man his divine patrimony of freedom and dignity, ^{who would divide the human race into men and mongrels, and who would wield the whips of the taskmasters over an enslaved world.}

Continue And it is only through faith in God, a living, ^{nourishing} vital, ^{mounting} faith that we can win through. Because our age ^{is} ~~was~~ cynical, so-called realistic and practical, but actually afraid and common-place, because it has ^{neither} ~~no~~ lift, nor vision, nor aspiring faith, ^{goes} that it ~~went~~ stumbling from one disaster to another and finally ended up on the edge of a wilderness.

Democracy without a conquering faith in a living God of Justice and Freedom cannot win against the powerful forces which are today arrayed against it. ^{Democracy} ~~Democracy~~ was born in faith ^{grew strong in faith} and must die when it loses that faith. It ~~has~~ ^{will have} no spiritual

Re-typed

~~a part in our destiny that is greater than the State or any and all forms of human organization and authority~~

~~no exclusive loyalty~~ -8-

resources upon which to draw, no vision, and without vision a free people must perish.

If our faith in God and in His moral law ^{can be} revived, then we shall ^{come to} know beyond any ^{the} peradventure of doubt that ~~despotism and cruelty and hate and the destruction of the~~ weak cannot triumph in the end, ~~and we shall then find the courage to challenge them,~~ ^{we shall} ~~the means wherewith to destroy them,~~ and the strength to endure until the victory is won.



new year
1940 RH-40

A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver - The Temple

Surely at no time in the past did our people face a new year with greater misgivings and with a more fervent prayer in their hearts for a Happy New Year than today.

The fate of the world hangs in the balance ~~today~~ - and with it, the fate of Israel. All that mankind treasures must ^{wait} upon the arbitrament of war. No one can foretell what the decision will be. The last great citadel of freedom and civilization is being hammered by fierce crushing blows. Israel is suffering grievously in all lands which have been over-run by the conscienceless and brutal barbarians.

But this is the year 5701!

We have a long history to draw upon, and wide vistas from which to gain a perspective upon our future and from which to draw confidence and patience and resolution. We, therefore, face the critical days ahead not without fears and misgivings, not without dark moments of agony and despair - for great is the wrath and terror and the menace - but fundamentally unshaken. Jews are carrying on, many of them magnificently. Witness the remarkable outpouring of loyalty, compassion and help on the part of Jews throughout the world for those of their fellow-Jews who find themselves in the iron crucible of affliction. All this is evidence of an inner soundness, of an unbroken solidarity. Thoughtful Jews know their history. They know their resources. They have taken the measure of their enemies. They understand the world significance of their great tribulation. They know, too, that the hope is a cardinal dogma of their ancient faith which they must not abandon.

A Happy New Year!

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE, ANSEL ROAD AND EAST 105TH STREET on NEW YEAR'S EVE, WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1940.

Many trials await our generation and much suffering. We are not at the end of this world war, but at its beginning. The areas of conflict will widen. The tides of death and destruction are sweeping on and will engulf many more nations before they finally recede. We, of this generation, will do well to regard this universal calamity as God's visitation for the sins of our age. We will do well to think humbly of repentance and contrition. Also we will do well to be of strong faith and cling to the conviction of the faithful men of all times, that "while the Lord has chastened them sore, He will not give them over unto death." We will be wise to gird ourselves morally for the great and long struggle ahead and be prepared to play a manly part in it; for it is better to die as free men for the Law of God than to live as slaves under the law of tyrants.

This hour, my friends, calls not for fear or doubt or despair, but for faith and valor and the buckling on of armor, both physical and spiritual. We are met in the Valley of Decision, and the hour is the hour of destiny. It is an eternal moment, when epochal decisions are being made which will affect the lives of generations of men yet unborn. The remaining free peoples of the earth must rally as one to slay the evil which threatens all mankind, the evil which they tolerated all too long and which they permitted to wax and grow mighty and menacing because they were blind, because they had grown thick and gross, had forgotten the covenant of God, and had worshiped "new gods that came up of late, and sacrificed unto demons and no-Gods."

We Jews who fought Moloch and Mammon and all savage and brutal gods in ancient days, in the name of a God of Justice and Love, and throughout the ages, have suffered, as we are suffering today because we were called by His name, must again find our places in the vanguard of the free armies of mankind, and fight, with invincible courage, all the bloody priests of Baalim today, all those who would

deny man his divine patrimony of freedom and dignity, who would divide the human race into men and mongrels, and who would wield the whips of the taskmasters over an enslaved world.

And it is only through faith in God, a living, vital, nourishing faith that we can win through. Because our age was cynical, so-called realistic and practical, but actually afraid and common-place, because it had neither lift, nor vision, nor aspiring faith, that it went stumbling from one disaster to another and finally ended up on the edge of a wilderness.

Democracy without a conquering faith in a living God of Justice and Freedom cannot win against the powerful forces which are today arrayed against it. Democracy was born in faith and must die when it loses that faith. It has no spiritual resources upon which to draw, no vision, and without vision a free people must perish. If our faith in God and in His moral law is revived, then we shall know beyond any peradventure of doubt that despotism and cruelty and hate and the destruction of the weak cannot triumph in the end, and we shall then find the courage to challenge them, the means wherewith to destroy them and the strength to endure until the victory is won.