



## Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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New Year's Sermon, 1942.



In our tradition Rosh Hashanah is variously designated as the Day of Alarm -- Yom Terruah; the Day of Remembrance -- Yom Zikaron; and the Day of Creation -- Yom Harat Olam. <sup>It</sup> The central ceremony of Rosh Hashanah is the blowing of the ram's horn, intended to stir and arouse people on the eve of the new year, even as an army is stirred by trumpet blasts on the eve of battle. Its purpose is to marshall us for the moral and spiritual battles of life. Ever so often we need a peremptory challenging and marshalling -- for we are all given to spiritual drifting and laziness. We would rather evade the sharp conflicts with our strong passions and desires which the moral life demands. We would readily compromise with the evil of the world in order to be left in peace and in the possession of the things we like to hold on to. Stern duty is so exacting, <sup>we</sup> and do not always feel equal to it. It is not easy to be just always, and truthful, generous, and forgiving. It is so very easy to slide into the less arduous ways of expediency, opportunism, temporizing and evasion. <sup>We</sup> ~~It~~ can grow morally slack so pleasantly; <sup>but</sup> and moral slackness is as dangerous to man's inner life as lax discipline is to an army which faces a dangerous foe in battle. Our new year is intended to startle us out of our moral lethargy -- to "pull us up" as it were, to bring <sup>us</sup> <sup>as with an</sup> to alert. The blasts of the Shofar are summons to heart-searching and self-examination. <sup>call</sup> <sup>Shofar</sup> <sup>is</sup> -- "God is in the voice of the Shofar", God is calling us to <sup>self-</sup> accounting, to confession, contrition, ~~and to new resolves and exertions.~~

First comes the alarm, the <sup>thoughtful men try</sup> ~~remembrance.~~ <sup>They try to</sup> ~~It is incumbent upon us~~ to remember. <sup>the</sup> ~~We must~~ recall all <sup>their</sup> ~~our~~ acts of omission and commission so as to prepare <sup>themselves</sup> for better planning and better execution in the days ahead. Unless we analyze from time to time our past life, take stock, as it were, of ourselves, appraise our conduct, <sup>evaluate</sup> ~~the value of~~ our achievements and the trend of our ambitions, we <sup>are</sup> ~~shall~~ never ~~be~~ able to redirect or re-organize our lives. <sup>Especially</sup> We must try to remember the things we would rather forget, the things which we would



rather hide from ourselves and from others.

We pray to God on this New Years day to remember. "Remember us unto life."

"Remember Thy mercies, O Lord." "Remember the merit of our Fathers." "Remember,

that we are dust." <sup>we say of God: *אלהים ברוך אתה*</sup> So, too, does God, wish us to remember many things -- our

<sup>hard-</sup>back-sliding, our <sup>How often have</sup> ~~hard-~~heartedness, our ingratitude, our sensuality, our bitter pride, our sharp dealings, our lack of charity. ~~Have~~ we been deserters from the moral battle-

fields of life? <sup>How often</sup> Have we been slackers? <sup>How often</sup> Have we been content to let others bear the

burdens of community life, while we crammed our maw full with <sup>selfish</sup> ~~private~~ gain and

indulged our pampered bodies with all the soft and silky things of life? How many

needy have we remembered? How many friends have we forgotten?

First comes the alarm -- <sup>זהו</sup> -- then remembrance -- <sup>1/25</sup> --  
~~the act of creation, the new~~ and lastly, ~~the~~ beginning -- <sup>זהו</sup> This is the day of

new beginnings. This is the day for renewal, for <sup>rebirth</sup> ~~the re-creation of self~~. If one is <sup>sufficiently</sup> ~~the moral labor of his past~~ aroused, and if one has the courage to remember, he may be reborn into a new life. It

is not true that we have but one life to live. The poet says that cowards die many times before their deaths. <sup>that is true. It is also true that</sup> Brave men <sup>and</sup> live many lives before their death -- <sup>each life</sup>

better and braver than the preceding one. Spiritual progress is the process of

burying our earlier and lowlier lives and <sup>rising to</sup> ~~being resurrected into~~ higher forms of

life. <sup>Our single</sup> ~~One~~ life is in reality <sup>an amazing</sup> ~~succession~~ of lives. The most wonderful miracle in

the world is not the resurrection of a dead body, but the regeneration of a living soul, the discarding of one life and the assumption of another. ~~by a human being~~.

We call it conversion. It is the most blessed and inspiring spiritual phenomenon

in the world. A new life <sup>in</sup> ~~for~~ a man means a new heart and a new spirit. When

you think differently and act differently, you are in every real sense a different man, or you are the same man living a different life -- which is the same thing.

Physiologically, we are told, a man renews himself every seven years. Spiritually,

he can renew himself as often as he wants. This is the divine in man. It is that



which makes him a co-creator with God. It is that to which the prophet Ezekiel appealed:

"Cast away from you all the transgression which you have committed and get you a new heart and a new spirit." Man has the privilege of getting himself a new heart and a new spirit, that is to say, a new life. "God renews every day the work of Creation -- reads our prayer. Every day is Creation day in God's Universe. "God builds worlds and destroys them" say our Rabbis. Change is the one unchanging fact in life.

Nothing is final, completed, permanent. And so our Rosh Hashanah -- the day commemorating the Creation of the Universe, challenges us to ~~start~~ <sup>re-creat</sup> our <sup>own</sup> little universe ~~afresh~~, to begin anew -- not to rest content with what we are or have been, not to be disheartened by past failures or dismayed by past disasters, but with renewed hope and vigor proceed to build a new life upon the ruins of the old, new altars <sup>where lie</sup> ~~among~~ the fallen <sup>and broken</sup> stones of the old.

✓ The world, <sup>too,</sup> ~~as a whole,~~ <sup>not</sup> ~~society generally,~~ <sup>must</sup> needs to hearken today to the voice of alarm, the voice of remembrance and the voice of new beginnings. We are at war, but ~~we~~ <sup>we</sup> are sufficiently alarmed about it? We are so confident of victory that ~~we~~ <sup>many of us</sup> fail to make the maximum efforts which are required for victory. Much is being done, but not enough -- not enough of co-ordination, of efficiency, of speed, of volume; and too much of bureaucracy, of self-seeking by groups, classes and individuals, by ~~individualist~~ <sup>individualist</sup>, laborer and farmer alike. There are many who fondly believe that we can prosecute a successful war, and at the same time make more money and live <sup>more</sup> ~~comfortably~~ <sup>even</sup> ~~better~~ than before. This is a fatal delusion. War drains the resources of a people. It does not replenish them. To win this war we shall have to be content to grow poorer, to go without many of the things to which we have been accustomed, to suffer severe privations. Failing to do that, <sup>unwilling to make sacrifices</sup> we may find ourselves stalled midway in the <sup>long</sup> ~~and bitter~~ conflict, unable to go ahead. While we <sup>may</sup> ~~shall~~ not lose this war, we may not win it, <sup>either</sup>. A tragic stalemate <sup>may</sup> ~~will~~ ensue, which will leave our world <sup>even more</sup> ~~a~~ sick and unsettled ~~as~~ than it was before the war, with the Nazis and Fascists still in the saddle, ~~blustering and~~



the clean before  
of free war

ways of life  
-4-

This is the life and death struggle  
between two irreconcilable ~~views~~  
which one must annihilate  
the other. One is infamy, bestiality,  
slavery and torture. The other is  
decency and ~~freedom~~.

menacing and confounding the world as hitherto, with nothing settled and with the  
whole tragic situation unresolved. "Shall the trumpet be sounded in the city, and  
shall the people not be alarmed?"

the people which understandeth the meaning of the alarm." *Blessed is  
our quest and for this is not just another war.  
One country will either win  
or it will be destroyed close to be either great or free. We shall either win or perish.*  
*The world needs to hearken also to the voice of remembrance. We must never  
forget the mistakes of the last war and of the last peace. We could have built a  
better world after the last war, had we not lost the vision and ~~lacked the moral~~  
conviction. The victorious nations abandoned the ~~structure~~ *peace, spring* of a peaceful organization  
of the world at the very outset, or betrayed it ~~after a while~~ *soon after*. They returned to  
their vomit. By their disunion, selfishness and rivalry they destroyed the moral  
foundations of a peaceful world. They sent the world back to its cynicism and  
black-guardism. They ~~helped~~ *pared the way for* a whole crop of dictators ~~to grow up and~~ *helped them* ~~to grow~~ *to grow*  
strong until their shadows darkened the ~~earth~~ *whole*. It is well that we should remember  
Pearl Harbor! But we should also remember Manchukuo and how we abandoned China  
and how we sent bursting cargoes of scrap iron and ship-loads of oil and gasoline  
to help Japan kill Chinese and bomb their defenseless cities. We should remember  
Spain and how we helped ~~to~~ *to* strangle the Spanish republic by our embargo and our ~~fraudulent~~ *fraudulent* policy of non-intervention. We should remember Ethiopia and how the democratic  
nations finally consented to her bloody subjugation. We should remember Munich and  
the brutal dismemberment ~~and betrayal~~ *all* of Czechoslovakia to which we ~~consented~~ *consented*. We  
should remember the unheeded cries of the terribly ~~persecuted~~ *wounded and* minorities of  
Europe, especially the barbarously assailed and outraged Jewish minority, and how  
we made sure their doom by announcing that their treatment was an internal political  
affair ~~and not of our concern~~ *of the respective nations*. We should remember all the ~~slogans and catch-words~~ *handy*  
of isolationism, and neutrality by which we and other nations sought to evade our  
share of the moral responsibility for maintaining order, decency and justice in the  
world. It is true that our national sins were not so much sins of commission as  
of omission. We did not invade China or Ethiopia, and did not attack Czechoslovakia*



or Spain. We did not persecute any people. But we stood idly by the blood of our neighbors -- and that is a grave <sup>and punishable</sup> sin in the sight of God!

Yes, <sup>it is a generation</sup> our world which is now engaged in a second world war, must remember ~~many things~~. What kind of a world did we build for our children after the last war?

A world of wild inflation, bloated prosperity, disastrous ~~collapse~~, panic, prolonged depression, <sup>and</sup> appalling unemployment, ~~and~~ <sup>were</sup> millions of our young people denied the opportunity to work, ~~to earn a livelihood~~ and <sup>were</sup> consigned to enforced and demoralizing idleness. Is this the kind of a world which we <sup>will</sup> ~~shall~~ again build for the youth of the world after this war?

~~Most assuredly we need to be alarmed today and reminded -- for~~ <sup>A</sup> cleansing memory is a rare prophylaxis. (*Historia -- magistra vitae.*) History is the teacher of life. <sup>then</sup> A knowledge <sup>and Frank A. Johnson</sup> of our past will teach us to understand the present and will <sup>a better</sup> help us to plan for ~~the~~ future.

If the free nations will be aroused -- and if they will have the courage to face their own past and <sup>will</sup> recall in humility and contrition all that has gone before, then it may be that they will be reborn into a new life. Then the agonies of this war may be the birthpangs of a new creation, a ~~new~~ nobler, <sup>and</sup> juster, <sup>and</sup> more tolerant world. We should not listen to the ~~morning~~ cynic, the sceptic and the scoffer. They are the dregs and the lees in the cup of life. There is nothing that man has made crooked that he cannot make straight. Behind every system is man. It is possible to banish war and eradicate poverty. It is possible, even though difficult, to reconcile <sup>the</sup> ~~sharp and bitter contradictions of an~~ <sup>our</sup> nationalism with internationalism, the trend towards collectivism, <sup>hastened</sup> ~~made necessary~~ by <sup>our</sup> industrial technology and mass production, with the rights and liberties of the individual. It is possible to give men economic security without robbing them of their political freedom. What the world needs is inspired new leadership, and the welling up from within of <sup>new</sup> ~~our~~ faith and new courage. <sup>The</sup> Dictators <sup>can do</sup> are not <sup>in any sense</sup> new leaders. <sup>the fact</sup>



in any sense. They are replicas of <sup>old</sup> the <sup>old</sup> tyrants, <sup>as old</sup> as Nero and Caligula. They prate of a new world order which they <sup>plan</sup> ~~mean~~ to establish. Actually they are reaching only after new boundaries and new <sup>empires</sup> ~~imperial conquests~~ which can only be cemented in blood and at the cost of the rights and freedoms of other peoples. To the youth of the world they have nothing to offer, but chains ~~and~~ ~~the~~ ~~President said the other day~~ -- death. Their ideas reek of the dungeon and the charnal house. They have no faith in man or in humanity, nor in the power of men to transcend themselves, and through their own <sup>initiative</sup> ~~imitation~~ and experience <sup>to</sup> achieve higher and nobler forms of <sup>a free and secure society</sup> ~~free social organization~~. They are boastful rulers ~~of~~ ~~with the instincts of slaves~~ <sup>and they are on their way out!</sup> <sup>The democratic faith alone can provide the new leadership; for</sup> ~~democracy~~ <sup>has</sup> faith in man and mankind, in an advancing ~~free~~ <sup>human</sup> society, in a cooperative commonwealth of all free and equal peoples, in a future when each man shall dwell under his vine and under his fig tree with none to make him afraid -- <sup>only</sup> ~~democracy~~ can achieve ~~the~~ good and gracious life for mankind.

My dear friends, we are met on this New Years Day -- a day of alarm, of remembrance and rebirth, in this House of God and our hearts are filled with deep and devout prayer. This New Year differs for many of you from any New Year which you have previously experienced. Many of your sons <sup>or your husbands</sup> are not with you today. They are far away, on distant continents and in foreign lands. Their country, in its hour of <sup>peril</sup> ~~gravest~~ ~~danger~~ has called them, and they have bravely responded. We pray here today for their safety and well-being. We know that they will faithfully perform their duties and will bring honor to themselves, to you and to <sup>our</sup> ~~their~~ beloved country. <sup>In all humility</sup> We pray for victory, ~~in all humility~~ remembering that we are not altogether blameless for what has come upon us, but imploring forgiveness, prepared for atonement and believing in redemption, we are resolved to start afresh, and <sup>to</sup> make a brave new beginning. We are resolved that the kind of world which we shall build tomorrow will be worthy of the sacrifices of our children and the youth of all the world. With this conviction deep in our hearts we may face the trials and uncertainties of tomorrow unflinchingly, reassured as was the prophet of ancient Judea who stood upon the



*of his desperate eye*  
ramparts, and to his troubled query: "Watchman, what of the night?" received

the confident reply: *היום הזה* "The new day is breaking even  
though it still is dark."





New Year 1942  
RH-42

Greetings and blessings for the New Year! The past year has been one of the blackest in our history. Mass slaughter of our people in Eastern Europe has been added to the ghastly record of Nazi persecutions. Whole communities have been exterminated in the occupied territories of Poland and Russia.

And yet the last year may have witnessed also the climax of Nazi power and the beginning of its final destruction. The Nazis expended two million lives in a desperate effort to end the war by destroying the armies of Russia, and they failed. They are now bleeding themselves white in a second such effort while the might of the United Nations is mounting and the day of final reckoning and victory is steadily approaching.

We Jews will take heart in all this and will carry on in high hope and faith. Our sons are fighting today on a dozen battle fronts to help destroy the enemy of their people and of mankind. We are proud of them and we shall try to match their valor by sacrificial performance of our own duties here at home.

Dark though these days may be we shall bear in mind that it is only out of the hard and bitter realities of life, through struggle and suffering, slowly and with many heart-breaking setbacks, that men can construct a cleaner and lovelier order of life for themselves and for their children.

We Jews should learn to see our problem against the background of the entire world's problem, and also against the background not of the last few years, but of generations, nay centuries. We are bearing today a double load of the burdens which all free men are bearing. Frequently that has been our fate in the past. Perhaps it is the key to our strange destiny so underlaid with grandeur and with pain. We never succumbed, and as long as we remain faithful to the God whose name and nature our seers revealed to mankind, as long as we serve Him in simple truth, in justice, in love and in sacrifice, dealing our bread to the hungry, bringing the poor that are cast out to our homes, and satisfying the afflicted soul, so long will light ever rise in our darkness, and the gloom shall be as the



noonday...

For us Jews this age of surge and thunder, of suffering and menace should be a compelling and undeniable challenge, not a disillusionment or a despair.

ABBA HILLEL SILVER





1. In our Tradition - variously designated -

Central ceremony - to stir and arouse our con- science.

Its purpose is to marshall us for the moral + sp. battles of life.

Ever so often we need a peremptory challenge. For we are given

- We would rather evade the sharp conflicts with our strong -  
Ints readily we would compromise with the evil of the world - Left a Page

Stern duty is so crushing - do not always feel equal to it.

It is not easy to be just always - truthful - generous - forgiving

It is so very easy to glide - less arduous ways - Expediency - Opportun.

- We can grow morally slack so pleasantly - Dangerous - less

- Our N.Y. is intended to startle us out - Moral lethargy - "pull us up"

To bring us to us with an alert - To ~~take~~ <sup>send us to</sup> our battle stations.

Blasts of call are summons - heart-searching - self-examination

- call is the word - God is calling - Self-accounting - Confession - Confession

2. Hence first motif - is Alarm - other - Then - Rememberance - 1005.

Thoughtful men try to remember - Recall - acts of Omission - One omission

So as to prepare loss - better planning.

- Unless we analyze - take stock - appraise our conduct - Evaluate

never able to reorganize or redirect our lives -

- Especially must we try to remember - rather forget - hide

- We pray to God on this N.Y. to Remember - We say - call us

So, too, does God with us to remember - our back-sliding -

How often have we been deserted - slackers - Content to let

- How many needy - friends?



3/ The First motif is Alarm - Second - Remembrance. Third - Creation - New Beginnings. (2)

זמן הזה הוא היום - This is the Day / New Beginnings.

This is the Day for Renewal - Rebirth

If one is sufficiently aroused - Has courage to renew. Moral lapses

May be reborn into a new life.

It is not true. The Past - That is True! It is also true -

Brave men live many lives before their death - each better -

Sp. progress is process by which we live - & rise -

Our single life is in reality an amazing succession of lives.

Greatest miracle - regeneration of living soul - discarding

We call it Conversion - most blessed & overpowering sp. phenomenon -

A new life in man, means acquiring a new heart - a new spirit

When you think differently -

Physiologically - divine - co-creator with God.

"God renews every day..." - Every day is Creation Day in

"God builds worlds & destroys them" - Change - Nothing is Final

And so our h.y. challenges us - to recreate our own little Universes

To begin anew - not to rest content - disheartened - renewed life

Build new life upon Ruins - new Altars

4/ Same 3 fold message in world as a whole - Soc. should Hearken

Alarm. We are at war. Are we sufficiently alarmed?

Confident of victory - fail to make maximum Efforts which

Much is being done - not enough - Speed. Too much -

Potential - Many who fondly - prostrate - make more money

Fatal Delusion - War drains - To win - content - poor.



Failing - Unwilling - stalled midway - in long & bitter conflict -  
unable to go ahead - While we may not lose the war -  
a tragic stalemate - even now sick - regis-sadals - menacing -  
nothing settled - whole tragic situation unresolved -  
to p 113 - other 113th p 113 113 - This is not just another -  
life and death struggle - 2 unresolvable happy - Infamy  
Our great and free country will either win - Jews - parish

5) World needs not only to be alarmed - Remember! - Never forget the  
Mistakes of last war - last peace -  
We could have built - Victorian Nations abandoned - proving  
They returned to their Vornit - By their Disunion - destroyed  
Paved way for Dictators - helped - shadow -

It is well that we should remember Pearl Harbor!  
Manchukuo - abandoned China - Cargoes -  
Spain - strangled - embargo - fraudulent - non-intervention  
Ethiopia -  
Munich -  
Unheeded cries of terribly wrong persecuted minorities -  
All the handy slogans -

It is true that our nat. sins - not as black - Dr. H. H. H.  
stood idly by - grave & punishable sin -

Now that our world is engaged in 2nd world war in a few months  
should remember many things - What kind of world?  
Wild in flames - bleated - Is this - build again?  
most assuredly - needs to be alarmed & remembered - History - history



a true knowledge and grand understanding of our true - understanding present

6/ If Free nations will be aroused - courage to reach in humility -  
May be reborn into new & better life. - Then the Agonies -

Should not listen - cynic - Right - scuffs - drugs - bees - Cups  
It is possible to build a better world! Nothing - man - created!

Behind every system is man!

It is possible to launch war - Erachate Poverty.

" " " , even if extremely difficult, to renew -

" " " to give men Security - without robbing them - / J.P. Fiedler

What world needs is genuine repentance - Improved Leadership -  
And the wellbeing up from within of new Faith Change.

The Dictators of our day - are not, in any sense real

Republics of old Tyrants - hero - Cerbera -

Prate - new World Order - new boundaries - cemented

To the Youth - Chairs - Death

Their ideas reek of the changers - charval house -

They have no faith in man - harmful - imitation

Brutal ruler with the instructs of slaves

The Democ. Faith alone can provide this new leadership!

For Dem. believe in man - Manhood - Advancing Society

Cooperative Commonwealth of all free regional peoples -

In a Future when each man shall dwell

- And only Dem. can achieve this good order the for -



7/ My dear Friends! We are met in this House, God on the h. y.  
 And our hearts are filled with deep and devout Prayers..

This h. y. differs for many & far - experienced.

Many of your sons - husbands - brothers - Their country  
 We pray to-night for their safety and well-being.

We know - faithfully perform - have.

We pray that - worthy & their sacrifices - youth, and  
 Build kind, world - justify their sacrifices

With this conviction deep - free trials - Unflinchingly

Reassured - Prophet, Ancient Jews - Ramparts

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע  
 שְׁמִי דָא וְאֵל  
 שְׁמִי דָא וְאֵל

- "The new day is dawning - even tho it is

