



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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New Year, 1958.

1) The Message - most universal -

Not Nature festivals - seasons of Spring or Harvest

Nor Historical Events - the remembered occasions of nat. deliverance

Days dedicated specifically to Man-Humanity - to the
individuals in her life - and to hopes of Mankind - ~~for the future~~

2/ On these days - we are moved to confront - in searching light

- to study the balance sheet of a whole year's living

- what we have done with our time, irretrievably and un-
pleasantly - and with our opportunities -

- whether we have advanced or regressed -

- And what we have contributed to the universal purposes
of society - to justice, brotherhood and peace.

3/ These Holy Days speak to us primarily not as Jews

- although they are richly endowed - poetry, symbolism

- Speak to us as human beings - concerned - earthly

prey to suffering and mortality - and yet invincible in our
aspiration - and confident in our kinship with the Eternal

- they remind us of our individual destiny - and of the heroic
destiny of mankind, and of how we may merge our own
own brief lives with the enduring life of mankind.

4/ The special and distinctive prayers - which are recited on ⁽²⁾
these Holy Days - ^{and which are} among the most noble and moving in an
entire literature - are devoted to them two times - Ma Ma

- "וְיָשִׁיר לָנוּ עֲלֵינוּ" - "What is man, O Lord, that thou art
mindful of him - and the son of man that thou thinkest of him -
His days are as vanity - His plans run to naught - He
walks as in a dream and finds no rest until the grave
closes over him."

5/ But again we are ^{told} ~~reminded~~ that our very limitations ^{should be}
our ~~daily~~ challenge and in them we must ^{place} ~~find~~ the
meaning and mission of our ~~life~~ ^{life} upon earth..

- It is true that we are finite and mortal - and in
our ^{day of} ~~vanity~~ pride and ~~domineering~~ power - we should
never lose sight of it -

- There are many sharp and unforeseen detours on the
road of life - and the road always ends - ^{and it ends}
for everyone alike - at the brink of the ^{lonely} ~~grave~~.

- But if ^{man} ~~one~~ is guided through life by the wisdom which
God has given ~~to him~~ - and lives according to the
laws of kindness and justice and truth - his life
will never be vain or empty - or wanting in
deep satisfactions.

6/ Man is "a creature of a day, without wings" wrote
Aristophanes in his play "The Birds". True enough!

- But wingless and earthbound - man has made for himself wings by means of which he can outstep the swiftest bird.
- Bound to the earth's surface - he has learned how to swing a satellite ~~into orbit~~ into outer space - and will soon reach the moon.

- One gift by nature to live and sail under water, man has by the inventive endowments of his intellect built ~~submarine~~ underwater ships which enable him to sail under the wilderness of ~~the~~ ice of the Arctic seas at ~~an~~ astounding speed, propelled by nuclear power which his own genius had discovered for him.

Such is Man! He can extend out reach, transcend and re-impress himself, if he so ~~wishes~~ wishes and tries, and not only in his physical domain - but in his spiritual domain as well.

- He has learned that all high peaks are difficult to scale - but not impossible!
- All precious things are rare - but can be had!

7/. In this solemn season of introspection and renewal we are summoned to acknowledge to ourselves and to our God - our failures to reach for the higher peaks and the more precious values of life -

^{to confess}
~~and~~ all the year's sad incidents of soul-contraction (4)
and self-diminution -
and to pray for insight and strength to be more - to
reach higher - to be better during the coming year.

201 / 1960s / 1960s / 1960s - in many ways! openly or secretly
- deliberately or unintentionally - sinned in our relationships
with our families - our fellowmen - our business associates
our employees or our employers - our community.

- We have been small where we should have been large-hearted.

- We did not rise to our full stature.

- We did not explore all the ~~highly complicated possibilities~~ of our being.

- All too many projects are left / left remained
unstarted - whole chapters left / left passed over - unread.

- With the passing of the years we have sunk deeper and deeper
into the grooves which we ourselves had made for ourselves.

- We have become the unconscious victims of the
routine and the commonplace -

- There is no eloquence in our living - no elevation of
tone ~~no color - no imagination no artistry~~ no enthusiasm, which, as the word signifies,
means to be inspired or possessed by the divine

8. Religion is meant to give dignity to man - to elevate
him with God in the work of creation!

Poor, humble, handicapped, a man might, nevertheless, as long
as he lives with God and does God's work in the world

be "a little lower than the angels" - and show us the
majesty and wonder of creative living

- the poet Wordsworth expressed ^{that} in his mystic, lyric lines that
9/ ~~And so we are asked~~ ^{And so we are asked} ~~continually to confess~~ ^{continually to confess} in this season of harvest self-
examination. God bless you all.

We have denied ourselves the ~~joy~~ ^{joy} of this festive presence.
- and we missed true Freedom - ~~lost~~ ^{lost} ~~relief~~ ^{relief} ~~disappointment~~ ^{disappointment} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~lost~~ ^{lost} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~pray~~ ^{pray} - ~~God~~ ^{God} ~~bless~~ ^{bless} ~~us~~ ^{us} ~~into~~ ^{into} ~~life~~ ^{life}
- And ~~lost~~ ^{lost} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~pray~~ ^{pray} - ~~God~~ ^{God} ~~bless~~ ^{bless} ~~us~~ ^{us} ~~into~~ ^{into} ~~life~~ ^{life}
into this fuller life!

- Grant us a New Year - that we may renew ourselves!
~~God~~ ^{God} ~~bless~~ ^{bless} ~~us~~ ^{us} ~~into~~ ^{into} ~~life~~ ^{life} - ~~God~~ ^{God} ~~bless~~ ^{bless} ~~us~~ ^{us} ~~into~~ ^{into} ~~life~~ ^{life}
And we will try to write a new page in our Book of
life - a cleaner, ~~brighter~~ ^{brighter} page.

10) The prayers of these Holy Days which are dedicated to
the second universal theme - to mankind - are likewise
exalted.

- According to our tradition the world was created on
of the 6th - And the prayers of this day therefore reflect
the needs, the hopes and the dreams of the whole mankind.

(Leviticus 54, 56, 58)

- The essential hopes of Judaism are ~~expressed~~ ^{here!} in the noble
prayers of these days: the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth
- the coming of the Messianic Age when man will be as to his
as brother - when the Alarums of war will no longer be heard

When each man will live under his vine etc

(1)

11) The Bible is sounded to remind us (1) That God is King over all the earth (2) That He remembers all his covenants and (3) And that a Covenant was made with our people at Sinai - to seek Him as a Kingdom of priests to and a holy people, to lead ^{all} mankind in the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. - (Exodus)

10) The need for establishing a universal order of law and peace more urgent. Sinai! Mosaic age - no present danger ^{there} of the whole world being engulfed in a universal sea of atomic fire.

Our world is far smaller > ancestors.

Sharply constricted - and tangled ^{into a} network of econ. + pol. dependency.

Tensions in outlying Immigration - or Labour commercial so instantly to every corner of the earth - And threaten the whole world with global disaster.

War and peace are no longer regional matters - and no one knows of any way of controlling the chain reactions of our weapon annihilation once the initial explosion of war takes place.

11) We seem to be a morally powerless generation in the

Grip of overwhelming physical forces which we ourselves ⁽¹⁾
have unleashed.

12/. The one internat. agency for world reconciliation - the U.N. -
has unfortunately been converted - check book ^{of power politics etc.} thereafter
for propaganda advantages.

Where only forthrightness - integrity and high purpose - can ever
hope to advance the cause of imperiled mankind - one
guide, all too often, artfulness, self-righteousness & evasion
- put old-time diplomatic guile to shame.

One gets, at times, the shattering impression - Parliament
of Man - spurious Convention of lobbyists & special pleaders
- whose worse offenders are the represent. the Great Powers

The apparatus is still there - elaborate - impressive - expensive
but the passion - the vision - the word of contribution -
only dead embers buried deep - other - ^{the} old unheeding
cynicism which - time & again - defeated.

13/. Back in 1917 - Pres. Woodrow Wilson told the Congress, the U.S.
"We are at the beginning of an age in which ~~the world~~ it will
be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of
responsibility for wrong, shall be observed among nations and
their governments that are observed among the individuals
citizens of civilized states."

I wonder whether Pres. Wilson was right!

Are we really insisting that nations observe the same

standards of conduct that decent individuals do? 18
And unless we do insist - ~~spread~~ ^{spread} - ~~the nations~~ ^{the nations} / ~~the world~~ ^{the world} will never
accept ~~such~~ standards and the responsibilities of actions -
of themselves they will never move!

14/ Because it is later than we thought - inspiration
Desperately urgent that we do - ~~do~~ ^{do} ~~that~~ ^{that} all the nations
of the earth organize ~~us~~ ^{us} to do ~~they~~ ^{they} will! They will!
Not Khrushchev's - not Trakters - nor yet Dulles!
But they will! ~~Righteousness~~ ^{Righteousness} ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~peace~~ ^{peace} - ~~Braking~~ ^{Braking} ~~land~~ ^{land}
Not the self-centered will - Antisemit - ~~division~~ ^{division}
obsessed with considerations of position - power perhaps
- which compounds justice with terror - Deceit with Oil
But ~~justice~~ ^{justice} will - all righteousness + peace - ~~breaking~~ ^{breaking} ~~land~~ ^{Swamp}
- when the world will have ~~shared~~ ^{shared} in - New Day - ~~made~~ ^{made}
the great atom bomb - then

וְיִשְׂרָאֵל יִשְׁלַח אֶת-יָדוֹ
וְיִשְׁלַח אֶת-יָדוֹ וְיִשְׁלַח אֶת-יָדוֹ

"the effect of righteousness will be peace
וְיִשְׁלַח אֶת-יָדוֹ וְיִשְׁלַח אֶת-יָדוֹ וְיִשְׁלַח אֶת-יָדוֹ

and the result of righteousness will be justice and
trust peace

And I have felt
a presence that disturbs me with the joy
of elevated thought; a sense sublime
of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

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