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

Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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Succoth, 1921.

The great virtue of Yom Kippur Day is that we may *on this day*. On Yom Kippur Day we are ourselves. We are actors no longer. We do not pose or pretend. We do not strut about to hide our feelings of inferiority, ~~we~~ proud to impress the world. We do not laugh to stifle a sob. We are not benevolent to win applause. The curtain is down. The theatre is dark and deserted. We are alone with ~~us~~ ourselves and with God.

As we repeat tonight (this day) in faltering accents the old, old confessions of human frailty: What are we, what is our life, what our goodness, what our power", we feel ourselves no longer well set-up personages, quite important, quite satisfied with ourselves and our achievements. We are just plain, humble folks, a little tired, a little confused, each with his own burden and his own hidden fears.

And we come before our Maker on this Day of Atonement even as tired children come clustering at eventide round their mother's knee, swiftly and without shame; ~~without~~ without affectation, ~~meekly~~; we seek refuge in Him and solace and peace. And each one whispers in the listening ear of God his own tale of want and sin, and sorrow of hope and longing, and God, Who is more merciful than those who preach Him, takes them all to His compassionate bosom and enfolds them all in His everlasting mercy.

~~And~~ How good it is, my friends, to be our true selves again, if but for a day or an hour. We are so seldom ourselves. In our busy lives we are a hundred selves, a hundred personalities in one. At home we are one thing. Away from home another. We have one attitude to our superiors, another to our equals, and a third to our inferiors. Few men are one and the same in their office, in their club, and in their church - chameleon-like we change from place to place, from one situation to another. But beneath these rapid changes in ourselves, in tone and speech and manner and attitude, there is that which is basically ourselves - the ego - the form which takes on all these changes of costume - the ~~own~~ channel over which flow all these waters. And

this true self, oft forgotten and neglected, claims its own whenever we are alone with our thoughts and feelings - with no one to play up to... this is such a moment and it is a healing moment.

Physicians who are often called upon to study the strange afflictions of the human soul, tell of how the cause of such ailments is the refusal of the patient to be honest with himself. He suppresses some strong, insistent emotion. He will not acknowledge it. He lives a lie. But the pressure continues and soon becomes too great. Our emotions turn to commotions. There is a psychic explosion - and a psychic wreck. In such cases to confess, to regain our own ~~XXX~~ self, is to be healed...

In a sense this is true of all men, of all of us. Our civilization is too complex and intense. Our lives, in the crowded, clattering cities, are so involved and confused. We are engaged in so many things. We are called upon to act so many parts. We must of all to lead the quiet, frank simple life of our true being. And so our nerves begin to wear, and our whole being to ~~XXXX~~ our character is disturbed, disintegrate, as it were. Once ~~XXX~~ a year we are to be ourselves, to lay off the masks, and strip the disguises, to confess ourselves to ourselves, and through this confession to become healed.

This return to ourselves makes us remarkably humble and modest. It is good to be ~~XXXXXX~~ ourselves and to be humble. To be truly humble is to be truly great. Only the humble in spirit can inherit the earth. Not self-debasement! Not the sense of one's utter worthlessness. But the ~~XXXXXX~~ humility of father Abraham who pleaded his own weakness and mortality and yet dared to challenge divinity. I am dust and ashes, he said, and yet I call upon God, the ruler of the world, in whose presence I am dust and ashes, to do justice! The humility that acknowledged, recognizes that we are but as a drop of water, in the endless seas, but even as a drop of water we may reflect all the glories of heaven,

Today (night), listening to the solemn intoning of the ancient wis-

"dom, a man comes from the dust to return to the dust. With the sweat of his brow must he make(?) his bread. Like within (withered?) like flitting shadows - a vanishing dream. We are very meek and lowly". Truly how frail we are, and how flitting. A dream indeed - and oft a disturbed and fitful dream - a voice between ~~two~~ two silences - a gleam against everlasting darkness. X Moses -

(Hebrew sec p. 7 of mss)

. How little we know of what

is above and below and within. In heedless hours(?) we boast of our mighty achievements, the speed with which we travel, the free communication through space, the conquest of air, and land and sea, the rivers we tunnel, the we . But before the , a living art we are as confounded as ever, and we know as little of the inner promptings of our soul as we know of Jupiter, the planet. We speak of the Palace of Truth - in truth it is but a rickety shack, full of holes and gaps and weakly propped up.

Millions of young and strong perish because we cannot conquer an invisible germ. And millions more are slaughtered because we cannot control ourselves.

How stupid and blind we are. It takes millions of years for us to stumble ^{up} on the simplest discovery. It is ~~only~~ only in the last 100 years which are as 1/10,000th of a second to the full day of man's existence upon earth that we have learnt the use of power, steam, electricity and machinery, and that by accident. And when we make fine discoveries in science and chemistry we use them to make poison gas, smokeless and flashless powder, torpedoes and long range cannon.

Old as the human race is, millions of years, how yet like children XX do we act. How like children do we break the very things we so painstakingly build all through the ages. A child will for hours build a toy house and then in one swoop knock it down completely. It takes a million years to climb out of the jungle and a day to return to it. We will take ten million of X our best - the distilled spirits of countless generations which preceded them, we rear them in care and love and educate them and then we throw them into a

foul, stinking trench to be butchered. How wise we are! We define man as a thinking animal. He sometimes thinks. He is always an animal.

But humble as we grow on a day such as this we are not dispirited, nor dejected nor debased. On the contrary, having regained a true perspective of our and positions we gain a ~~§~~ certain confidence in ourselves. We only

. An optimist has been defined as a ~~§§§§~~ pessimist who has reached bottom. Well, there is ^{some} ~~§§§§~~ something in that. Having surrendered our juvenile illusions concerning the greatness and goodness and wisdom of the human race, we may then take stock of what we really have achieved, and the strength that is really ours - if we but use it. And Yom Kippur is arrived to urge us to discover this strength even as we become at the same time conscious of our weakness - to count our triumphs even as we number our failures, to acknowledge our sins and to find salvation. Above all Yom Kippur aims to revive in us the faith which will enable us to transform failures into triumph, and weakness into strength. It offers a ^{spiritual} alchemy by which ~~§§~~ the dross is transmuted into gold.

To man it says - you have sinned, yes you! Wittingly or unwittingly, willingly or unwillingly! You have sinned. There is no man that sinneth not. To be free from sin is to be an angel - and angels are not found upon this earth. God created man out of the earth. And there is dust in his soul still, and in his eyes. ^{*}His very sins may become the elements of his salvation.

White is the color of purity - because it is a mixture of all colors. The truly great and pure personality is a compound of all the colors of experience.) He sins, this son of Adam - Adam means earth, It also means red. And we are a compound of both - the of the clod and the fury of the fiery passion.

We sin! ^{*}

But we need not abide in sin - the whole glory of man is that he wishes to be like unto the Gods - perfect. There is in him a force which propells him upward - a power which creates visions of perfection and them urges him on to attain them. ^{*}Man can rise above his sorrows & failures

These very failures become the steps up in the ladder of man's great ascent.

And at the head of the ladder God awaits him.

Return unto Me

God loves the righteous, ~~XXX~~ but he loves

the repentant sinner more, even as a child who has that evidenced

the mother. Have faith in yourself! It is true we are of earth.

But earth fashioned in the image of God, and inspired with the breath of life.

You have ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ dominance over all things of earth. You cannot reach God but Him

you can realize in your life. Your life may be short but you ~~XXX~~ can live

a true life. A small sphere is as round as a large sphere. An epic ~~XX~~ of

majestic step of full volume and length may be great poetry, but so may also

a gentle lyric sonnet, of grace and symmetry, and measured line - brief but

full!

To forgo the opportunities of a wider life and to deny the vision which reserves us, not to seek fulfillment in life's great adventure is the blackest of sins - the sin against the Holy Ghost (2).

And to mankind this day has a message of faith. Do not despair - your progress is slow and laborious, your way is strewn with wreckage and white sepulchres, but your way is towards the sun and your progress is sure.

Every dream that the race is dreamed has come true and will come true. A dream is a fulfilled desire - and nothing that the race has wished hard enough and long enough has failed to come true, or will fail to come true. We dreamed of flying - and the were ~~XXXXXX~~ imaged as men with wings. We dreamed of flying carpets and . Man wanted to fly and now he flies. We dreamed of swift locomotion - of seven league boots, and now we move swiftly and comfortably. Soon we shall circle the earth in a day. The race dreamed of the human voice reaching to far distances, Echo and ~~XXXXXX~~ were messengers of the human voice. Our voices travel now over land and sea simply and without effort. The race has dreamed of eternal life, of the fountain of youth. Before our very eyes this miracle is coming to pass. Some day man will con-

quer death, and voluntarily determine his own span of life. The race moves slowly but there is no halt or limit to its progress. Havelock Ellis tells of a slow and sacred folk-dance which takes place annually through the streets of Helston, England. Two steps backward and three steps forward and so the dance is done. And so progress moves. Two steps backward. Three steps ~~XXXX~~ forward. Or like the tide. Waves recede and then advance, recede and advance until the tide comes in. We are constantly climbing but after each ascent we get out of breath and in order to pass from peak to peak we must descend into the valley. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

God did not create man. He is still creating him, and endless are the changes through which the race of man shall pass and endless the scope of our wakening mind and soul.

So forward in faith! Our faith will move mountains! We are still at the beginning of things. The greatest ideas are yet to be born, The happiest days are yet to be. The golden age is still to come. And to us, ~~XXXX~~ children of ~~XXX~~ a deathless vision, to us Jews, Yom Kippur has an especial call to faith. As a people we have sinned grievously. Amidst the care and concerns of a crowded life we often fail to live up to our high calling as Children of Israel, servants of the Lord. We lend ourselves too readily to the passion for having and ~~XXXXXXXX~~ holding the material things of life. The traditional sanctity and beauty of our Jewish homes are being endangered by the ~~XXXXXXXX~~ croaching spirit of Godlessness, selfishness and dilettantism of the age. Our young men and women are not imbued with that love for the pure and noble things of life, the higher interests. Nor are they taught devotion and love for the great heritage of their race. Wave upon wave of hatred, cast up by the upheaval are breaking upon us - in Eastern Europe, a Jewish civilization of 1,000 years of culture, organization, and tradition is being uprooted and destroyed by fire and , by pestilence and rapine. Millions are homeless exiles, the highways of travel on land and sea, seeking a home - 200,000 orphans, little things bruised so early by the hands of fate,

are being parceled out, in groups of 100 to 500 to 1000 - to S. Africa, Canada, Australia, the Lord alone knows where. A tragic odyssey indeed, my friends.

And shall we become disheartened? *(Hebrew see p18 of msg)* We are immortal. We are immortal because of the immortal vision which is ours - we are the Risen people of an immemorial crucifixion. Men rage against us. We are guilty of great heresy. We denied the divinity of a man, only to assert the divinity of man. Amidst the ⁱⁿnumerable tabernacles of man, amidst XXX spires and domes, mosques, cathedrals, and pantheons, we have sought the faith that builds them and that is by them destroyed. We were the pilgrim spirits of humanity. We were the voice crying in the wilderness calling to repentance; *(power?)* the voice that challenged oppression slavery, superstition, fervor. We summoned our dreamers and they came forth out of the Chaldea(?), from Midian, from Gilead and Tobua, from Anaboth, and Nazareth and they shattered the idols XX that enthralled men. And so we won the dread and hate of an unrepentant world.

But are we disheartened? Does the fountain fail because the leaping waters fall to earth again? Across the waste of ages, through the darkness of the world we march on, ~~as~~ in our hearts the prompting of an ancient splendor, in our XX blood the rhythm of an immemorial song and in our hand a torch!

(Hebrew see p 20 of msg)
*** XM Insert: (where?) Truly we can say -

(Hebrew see p17 over of msg)
But this day is to remind us that there(?) sins will be forgiven, by atonement, by repentance, by new resolves. Let us resolve to make our homes - a striving for the spirit of our race - and our hearts - a Temple for our God. Let us recall that we have not endured through suffering only to perish in prosperity, that we and our children are dedicated *(ends here)*

5-21

I. Symbol of Succah.

A. Pathos : In field -
at Red Sea - Parol / 15

B. Frailty of Human Life.

B. Eternal Pilgrimage.
Tents -

D. To seek joy in nature.
Succoth is nature festival
To be natural - Begin
perspective of life death

— 1921 —

1925

One More
(4) Water for Saturday
+ milk / day -

~~Bulletin~~ ~~Letter P. 101~~

* Twenty Condolences
1923 and 1925