

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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Yom Kippur, 1935.

Yom Kippur 1935

Though this is a fast day, its essential message is not one of despair, but of confidence, hope and exaltation. Though our prayers echo with the sad refrain of man's sins and transgressions, they NAXX leave us with no sense of defeat. For the climax of all these prayers is always forgiveness, purification and a new start.

Our religion does not teach that man is hopelessly vile and perverse, nor does it pronounce doom upon a man simply because he has sinned. Judaism knows the nature of man, his capacities and his limitations. It knows that man is not an angel. "There is no man living that sinneth not". The saint without sin is hardly even a legendary figure in the religious annals of our people.

Man is a creature of passions, and self-will, of envy, pride, hate and lust.

God did not fashion him out of the gauze and gossamer of immaculate virtues,

impossible of man, nor is it even impatient with his imperfections.

Self-righteous men are inclined to judge harshly. R. Elazer b. Simon, scholar, aesthete, . There are self-righteous men who pass judgement on the moral blemishes of their fellow men as sharp and intolerant as Elazer b. Simon on the physical blemishes of the poor man. They forget that God made the small and the great and the candle for all alike. Abmaham, who of all men was least peccable, "Friend of God", was about to die. Michael, to prepare him; would not give up his soul until angel should give him God's whole universe, and Hid management of it; took him on the heavenly chariot drawnby fiery cherubim high above the earth, so that Abraham could see at a glance all the doing's of men and nations. And when AKKKKKAAbraham saw the violence and fraud in the world, the crime and injustice; the wars and brutafities of men, he, the pure in heart, the righteous man, was moved to fiery wrath and indignation and cried aloud: "O, God of justice! Strike these men dead! Hurl Thy thunderbolts upon the heads of these sinners and blasphemers! Let the earth swallow up these swindlers, criminals and adulterers!" And behold, fiery darts

did begin to rain down upon the world of men, destroying, and the earth opened up its mouth to engulf the whole of creation - when a voice from on high cried out: Stop thy chariot, O ARchangle Michael, lest Abraham, the sinless man, in his untempered judgement, destroy My whole creation. He knows not the nature of man, or that the world is sustained only through grace, forgiveness and long-suffering.

Realizing that man is so constituted that he is prone to sin, our religion profers the hope of forgiveness, provided he sincerely repents, makes restitutions for the wrongs done to his fellow men, and highly resolves to avoid sin in the future. Judaism is not interested in punishing man for his sins but in helping him. The emphasis is placed not upon the destruction of sinners but upon the destruction of sin.

R. Meir - many thieves and criminals in his neighborhood - prayed that they might perish. Per , the gentle and deeply spiritual wife of R. Meir, deprecated his prayer. "The Psalmist prayed, - let sins disappear from the earth. He did not pray, - let sinners.."

The sinners should be induced to repent. Sins and provocation to sin, and the conditions which often drive men to sin - they should be destroyed.

Our religion therefore admonishes men to forgive each others even as they hope for the forgiveness of God. It was a beautiful custom among our people that on the day before Yom Kippur each Jew would go to his neighbor, whom he might have wronged or hurt, wittingly or unwittingly during the year, and ask his forgiveness. Our religion teaches us to be tolerant of other men's failings and defedts, also be tolerant of other men's views and opinions, even if you feel that they are wrong. Invisible hands of heredity and environment have woven them into the pattern of his mind. They are his fate and his destiny.

Moses, before his death, prayed unto God that the leader over Israel who would succeed him - — might be patient with every man regardless of his views and opinions.

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Our distraught world today is shot through with a ruthless and relentless intolerance of differing opinions, of free thought and opposing views; that is the curse of our age. Dictators have arisen who have outlawed independent thought and have decreed that all men must think as they do or be destroyed. Men are thus hereded back into the primitive iron & conformity of savage tribes. Young, impatient, romantic movements, of a political or economic nature, such as have swept through coutries like Russia, Germany, and Italy, overly-zealous, overly eager, overly optimistic, confident and self-righteous, tend sharply toward intolerance and fanaticism. They destroy the very thing which they wish to achieve. They end up in black terror, desolation and disaster. The older wisdom of mankind, matured in its classic **** of thought, is less eager KX and visionary, more restrained in its hopes and expectations concerning the early advent of the Kingdom, but therefore *** also more tolerant. liberal, latitudinarian. It knows the long, hard road which the race must travel and the slow stages by which it advances and therefore counsels tolerance and moderation, discourages mee from trampling over the prostrate bodies of human rights, liberties, decencies and ### amenities, in a mad stampede to get quickly to the goal.

But let no one assume **** that our faith counsels men to be indifferent or resigned to the evil in themsleves or the world. It does not. While it urges tolerance of other men's failings, it demands intolerance of one's own.

as Man should be severe a judge and taskmaster of himself as possible! Of himself man should always expect and demand the maximum and the optimum. Man is too prone to be lenient with himself, to excuse, condone, and understate his own deficiencies. That is the way of spiritual and *** intellectual degeneration.

Morally, man should always be taut, for only out of tightly drawn string can music be drawn. Man should not permit himself to rest at any goal, nor be

satsified with easy goals. Man should dare greatly and strive greatly to the very reach and limits of his powers. It is a virtue to be satisfied with what one has. It is a vice to be satisfied with what one is. The divine image in a man is his yearning for the infinite - the thirst to know more, be more, do more, serve more! Show me a man who has what the poets call the "divine discontent", not fretfulness(?). or the "green sickness" of envy, or consuming worldly ambitions, but the "divine discontent" with his own spiritual and inimperfections and tellectual inadequacies, and I will show you a man who is tasting of the nectar of the Gods. Most men die without really having known themselves. They failed to explore their own world to its outermost boundaries. Deep within them, there may have been rich deposits of precious spiritual metals, of power, of beauty, of talent. But they never took the trouble to drive the shaft deep enough down into their minds or hearts. They lived on the surface of their beings, while whole worlds lay buried beneath them.

Man has to discover his spiritual and mental world just as he has to discover his physical universe. Electricity was always there - since creation - but as far as man was concerned it was not there until he discovered it; radium, oil, gas the principles underlying the wireless, the radio, television, aviation, were always there, but invisible to the human eye until man opened his eyes to see them.

So within all men are the spiritual and intellectual powers unsuspected by him and only revealed to him and of service to him when he reaches down or up for them. These are powers which will give us the gift of spiritual television, of seeing far, very far, through things and into the heart of things, the gift of a spiritual radio to hear the distant heartbeats of the world, the gift of spiritual wings to rise to higher levels and high among the stars, the alchemist gift to transform the dross of the commonplace XX into the gold of the rare and the exquisite.

When a man sets about discovering himself, his entire world about him becomes a world of exciting discovery and adventure. Then he sees colors and designs he never saw before. The common, the ordinary, the drab, the everyday thing becomes a burning bush wherein God reveals Himself, and the common folk whom he brushed by and scarcely noticed before become transfigured - each a mystery, a fervent , and a majesty.

Our religion teaches us to be tolerant of men but not of the wrongs of society, social evils and mischievous forms of social organization, of poverty and exploitation, with tyranny and political corruption, with war and the of war. These ancient evils of society exhaust and defeat men in their hard struggle to reach higher levels and happier fields of social existence. Man must not be tolerant of them. Man must not say: They have always been! They always will be! There is nothing to be done about them! Why beat our heads in vain and break our backs against the unyielding iron bars of such a fate?

Such a mood of resignation might come over us when we hear today echoes of a new war in distant Ethiopia. Isn't it hopeless? we are prone to say. We still remember the last, bloody world war, its ten million corpses, its thirty million wounded, its universal misery, horror and destruction. We are still suffering from the disastrous economic and spiritual shell-shock from that war. Fresh in our minds are stillthe fervid, passionate declaration - this shall be the last war! A war to end wars! We shall have peace. We shall build a League of Nations to insure peace by mutual pledges of non-aggression and by the promise of protecting the weak against the aggression of the strong. What an idle dream it has all turned out to be! A signatory to the covenant, in violation of its pledged word, under the more violent and dishonest of pretenses, has forced a war upon a peaceful and peace-loving nation, and is raining down death upon its defenseless towns and villages - killing men, women and childrens; the waris on again! The drums of war are beating again! The beast is on the

rampage again! The four horsemen of the apocalypse have begun their ride again!

What's the use? ... In such reasoning is the final disastrous defeat of man and his civilization. To resign ourselves to social evils just because they are hoary with age - hard to eradicate, obdurate and stubborn, is to betray mankind. It is to deny God. It is to ignore that faith in man and that power which can move mountains! It is to forget that man is capable of a spiritual tenacity, a perseverance, a rebound after defeat, a courage which is forever relenished from the hidden springs of his being, which if invoked does in the long run overthrow the most formidable forces of evil, and raze seemingly impregnable fortresses. There is nothing that man cannot overcome - except death! War is man-made. So is poverty! So is tyranny! So is every forme of exploitation and corruption! They can be un-made by man! Not easily of course, or quickly. For vast and powerful are the legions of Lucifer! Deep-seated in man are those instincts and passions in man which without proper curbing and direction, bring these miseries upon his race. Put it can be done! And it will be done, though the race of man will suffer one setback after another, and one heartbreak after another, and one disillusionment after another. Man is fashioned out of clay, it is true, but also out of fire! Men are creatures of littleness and meanness, but also children of splendor. They have aspirations, ideals, they yearn to rise above chaos, above the muck and the filth of their little, mean lives. There is a "best" in man, and this best in man has resolved and decreed that there shall someday be a warless world, a just world, a clean and a fair and a kindly world for the children of man, that someday all man(?) shall live under his own vine and under his own figtree with none to make him afraid. This prophetic, prayerful hope of mankind, this messianic outreaching for an - for a golden age of blessedness, for a - one long unbroken Sabbath of peace for mankind, these cannot be permanently denied.

Our faith therefore summons us to the ranks of the faithful and the in-

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domitable - to fight these enemies of society, never to weary, never to resign ourselves to their dominion, through education, through agitation, through organization, through planning, through experimentation, through trial and error, if necessary through revolution; ways must be found, ways can be found, to put an end to poverty and war in the world, poverty which breeds war, and war which breeds poverty.

Each man ** a soldier on the army of the Lord! This is the call of our faith. Our weapons - truth, faith, courage and love of man! Our leaders - the thinkers, the sages, the men of vision, of the world. Our objective - a new heaven and a new earth for the children of man! And a new and everlasting covenant of peace and righteousness, a day when,

"Violence shall no more be heard in thy land

Desolation nor destruction within thy borders,
a day when,

"Thy people shall be all righteous,
They shall inherit the earth forever..."

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and my despair but YK-35 this is a fast day- its essential message is one of confidence, hope and exactation. The our prayers supert the refrain of mains sins and hourgressions, they box us with no sense of defeat and women things. For the climan gother prayers is always for vivers, Our religion does un kach that wan is werebraidly with and preverse.

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proverty which breves was and was which brings proverty.

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ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED ON YOM KIPPUR EVE BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE ANSEL ROAD AND EAST 105TH STREET ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 7, 1935

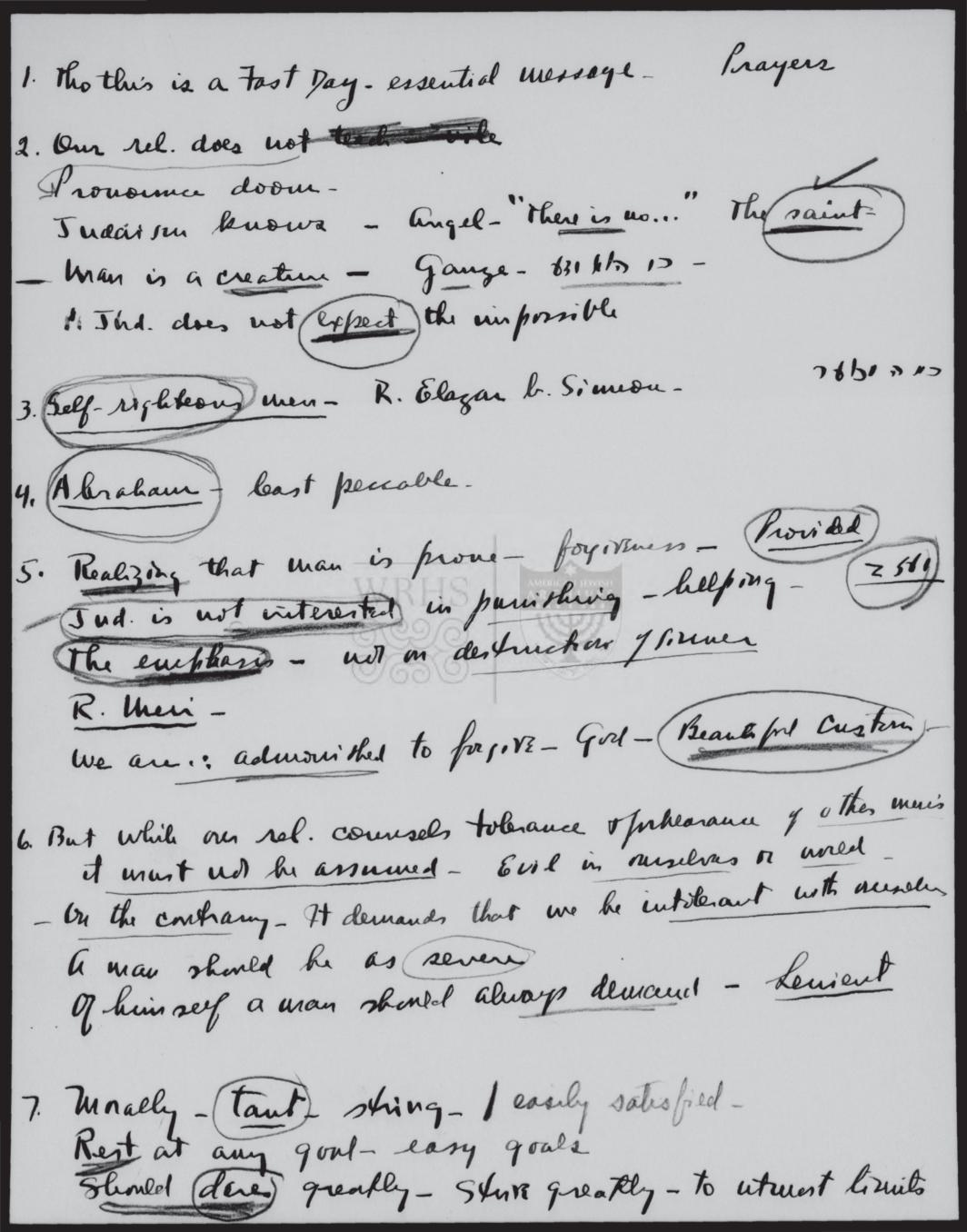
Our religion teaches us to be tolerant of the sins and failings of other men but not of our own sins or of the sins of society. Man must not resign himself to the ancient evils of society or to the mischievous forms of social organization - to poverty and exploitation, tyrasny and political corruption, war and the institutions of war. Man must not say: They have always been! They always will be! There is nothing to be done about it!

Such a mood of resignation might come over us at this time when we hear again the echoes of war in distant Sthiopia. "Isn't it all hopeless?" we are prome to say. We still remember the last bloody world war with its ten million corpees and its universal misery. Fresh in our minds are still the fervent declarations of those days: This shall be the last war, a war to end war! A League of Mations will be organized to insure peace through reciprocal pledges of non-aggression, through inviolable promises to protect the weak against the aggression of the strong! What an ideal dream this has all turned out to be! Behold, a nation, signatory to this selema covenant of peace violating its own pledged word, under the most impudent and dishonest of pretexts, forcing a war upon a peaceful nation and raining down death and destruction upon its defenseless towns and villages, killing men, women and children. Mar is on again! The beast is mux on the rampage again!...What's the use?

In all such reasoning lies the final defeat of san and of his civilization. To resign ourselves to social evils just because they are heary with age and hard to eradicate, is to betray mankind. It is to deny God. It is to forget that san is capable of a spiritual tenacity, a rebound after defeat, a courage forever replenished from the deep springs of his own being, which, if invoked, can in the long run overthrow the most formidable forces of evil. And they seemingly impregnable pretentes. There is nothing that san cannot overcome — except death. War is man-made. So is poverty. So is tyranny. So is every form of exploitation

and corruption. And they can be un-made by man. It can be done and it will be done, though the race suffer one set-back after another, and one distilusionment after another. Man is fashioned out of clay, it is true, but also out of fire.

The are creatures of littleness and meanness but we are also children of splendor. We have aspirations and ideals. We yearn to rise above chaos. The best in man has decreed that there shall someday be a war-less world, a just, clean and kindly world for the children of man. And this mighty resolve of the race cannot be permanently denied. Through education, through agitation, through organization, through experimentation, if necessary, through revolution, will find the way—for the way must be found — to end poverty and war in the world — poverty which is the seed-bed of poverty.



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Common fress -11. Ce this is given to wan who is entitles out fluis org-g aloth-indulence - prids, concert, fear, failure 12. We must also be intolerant of Evils (sourtly) of windierous forms of social organization - Porarty ate then and with historiens schount - Want wet for: alway hun

nothing to be done - heat our hands -13. Such a word of resignation- hear distant echoes- War -frut et hoplers! Still remember -What an idle dream it has all been! a nation signaling was is on again! drung heart - Horse wer what to use?! - In such reasoning is final defeat 14. To resign ourselven - hvary obdusate - stubbon - bestray deny-19 ion It is to forget that man is capable of the Tenaertyperseverance - rebound - courage, reflews that Then is no ther; that man Canus who cowers death was is man-made - will thought are will fuffer that it can be done - will, thought are will fuffer I have is forhimed (ant clay) 15. There is a "hest" deared - war less.
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I am resigned. 57711. I by reciting K- we brit up - then wemony Burld bridge - They are not deard, list-8. Grapet Trajedy- projetten- ho ou to say K akiba - redeen 9/ When WE recite 16. for our dead-The generatures toggther + Establish Sorther justs

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I faith the way the Raeldiely - days. is the whole vait amone in which it swalled Object is as cruply, survival of incomprhender as one the infruits solar regoleries-- I believe in God- in will + Swhelinger to - This is the Koodel way & pay bath! 2-By ve by the built of french we havid a bridge for the greatest to have the form in us - we carry on their cent we take up their touch! bufitubel 3- qualit fragely is all to the lutte after us -When an report the the fact themends others extacted the techniques of left are death

The Holy Days of Tishri

By RABBI A. H. SILVER

The Temple

THE month of Tishri is the great Joliday month of the Jewish calendar. It is ushered in by Rosh Hashannah—New Year Day—a day of spiritual stock-taking. The liturgy of the day and the sounds of the

shofar—the traditional ram's horn — summon men to soulsearching and to the examination of their actions and conduct in life.

There follow 10 days of repentance culminating in the great Day of Atonement — Yom Kippur. This is a fast day from sundown to sundown. On this day the wor-



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day the worday the worshiper is admonished to
make his peace with his fellowmen by rectifying whatever wrong
has been committed and by granting and receiving forgiveness. Forgiveness is then asked of God for
the sins and errors of which no
man is blameless. Thus on the
threshold of every new year, a solemn period of days is set aside for
spiritual meditation and communion
and for repentance and contrition.
These days serve as days of spiritual renewal for the people of
Israel.

Five days after the Day of Atonement, there begins the Festival of Succoth—the Feast of Tabernacles—which is the classic harvest festival of Israel. It is celebrated with the building of out-of-door booths commemorative of the booths which the ancestors of Israel built in the wilderness after they left Egypt. The palm and citron, the willow and myrtle are brought to the sanctuary, and homes and places of worship are made fragrant with fruits and flowers, symbols of gratitude and thanksgiving to God's goodness are bounty.