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Day of Atonement, 1936.

Yom Kippur (Kol Nidre)
Sept. 26, 1936

We have no confessionals in Judaism. We are not called upon by our religion to confess periodically to some religious official, who is the appointed guardian of our conscience, the catalog of our misdeeds. But once a year, we are summoned by our faith to confess our sins, not to man, but to God. That day is the awesome day of Yom Kippur. We are urged on that day to enumerate all of our sins starkly and frankly, לגדול אף חסד זנב - it is necessary to itemize them - sins open and secret, willful or unwilling, all the sins of which the hand, mouth, heart and mind are capable.

For only as we have the courage to see ourselves as we really are can we have the will to reach out to what ought to be. As long as we are content to delude ourselves with a false image of ourselves, we can never approximate the image of God after which man should progressively fashion himself.

Every man, quite naturally, thinks well of himself. כל אדם רואה עצמו כצדיק "No man ever readily convicts himself of wickedness." Every man is quick to excuse and to forgive himself. Man has little trouble to persuade himself that whatever wrong he has done had been nobly motivated. Man has to live with himself regardless of what he has done, and so he quickly finds ways by which to make it snug and comfortable for himself in his own household.

But this is the way of spiritual death. "Love should cover up all sins," says the Bible, "but not self-love nor the sins which we ourselves commit." Our love of others should be so great as to move us to overlook all their sins against us. But our self-love should not induce us to overlook our own sins. With ourselves we should be exacting - just, to be sure, but rigorous. Of God, we may ask to be judged in mercy, seeing that after all we are but human, but of ourselves, we should ask for no such favors. We should judge ourselves not leniently, but exactly, yea, severely.

Hence the Vidui - the Confession - occupies a central and recurrent place

in our Yom Kippur services. The genius of this day admonishes us not to spare ourselves but to be completely frank, open and unreserved in the acknowledgment of our failures and our misdeeds. No evasion, no equivocation, no special pleading - for that defeats the very purpose of the Confession which is to help us to recognize and to correct our mistakes, to restore our spiritual perspectives and to set our feet straight again in the way of life.

What, then, is the proper frame of mind in which to approach the solemn confessional hour of Yom Kippur? What must be our spiritual attitude to this day if it is to yield up to us its richest treasures of comfort and inspiration?

The great Hebrew poet-philosopher of the Middle Ages, Solomon Ibn Gabirol, one of the greatest poetical geniuses of all time, wrote a profoundly moving and exalted liturgical poem - one of the imperishable glories of Hebrew literature - called "The Royal Crown" מלכות מלכות. This poem, because of the depth of its piety and the grandeur of its style, has been incorporated into the religious services of the synagog. It was written ~~and it is~~, as Gabirol himself declares in the introductory couplet, "to help mankind to find the path of right and worth", ^{and it is} a perfect answer to the questions which we have just put.

The first part of the "Royal Crown" is an elaborate exposition in a fervent, passionate lyrical vein, of the theme announced in the first line of the poem proper:

3 לון מלכות מלכות מלכות מלכות
"Wonderful are thy works, and that my soul overwhelmingly knoweth." The greatness, the might, the beauty, the triumph, the splendor of God and of His universe -- all these evoke the poet's passionate adoration, and in the sublimity of Creator and His creation, the poet finds, even as did Job centuries before, the key to an understanding of man's place in the universe and his adaptation to it.

Through four hundred magnificent strophes the poet weaves this master theme into the gorgeous tapestry of his song - the existence, unity, eternity,

wisdom and omnipotence of God - the cosmos which He fashioned out of chaos, its expanse and infinite variety, its organization and the reign of its laws, the marvellous circuits of planets, stars and solar systems, the order of revolving seasons, the mysteries of life and of intelligence, and the supreme mystery of man himself formed from a pinch of clay into which a soul of flaming restlessness has been breathed.

This meditation upon the might and majesty of God and His handiwork induces in the poet a mood of supreme humility, and this leads him to the unfoldment of the second great theme of his poem - man's littleness and insignificance:

"God, I am ashamed and confounded
To stand before Thee knowing that even
As the might of Thy greatness
So is the utterness of my poverty and lowliness".

.....

"Thou art great, and Thou art wise, and Thou art God!
And I am but a clod, and a worm,
Dust from the ground,
A vessel full of shame,
A mute stone,
A passing shadow,
"A wind that fleeth away and returneth not again".....
What am I,
What is my life?
What my might and what my righteousness?
Naught is the sum of me all the days of my being,
And how much the more so after my death!
From nothing I came,
And to nothing I go."

The poet is aware that humbleness of spirit is the key which opens the sanctuary of the spiritual life. If one is to see visions and hear the voice of God, one must approach the burning bush of revelation in humility, with unshod feet as did Moses of old. Pride and arrogance bar the way to God. A man must realize first that he is dust and ashes before he can discover the glow of fire within the ashes.

כל עפר אדם הוא - כל אדם הוא עפר - כל אדם הוא עפר

"The wicked man because of the pride of his spirit cannot inquire;

therefore God is never in any of his thoughts". There is no room for God in a heart swollen with pride; only in the contrite and broken heart does God dwell.

As long as a man feels himself great, important and secure behind his money bags, or his family crest or his clever mind, he can not know either God or man nor can he taste the spiritual food of confession, repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation. These are reserved for the humble in heart.

The poet passes from contemplating man's littleness and insignificance to a contemplation of man's ingratitude. 1216 b h 13

Psalm 137 - 137:9. "For all the good which Thou hast bestowed on me, I have requiteth Thee with evil."

Man is ever so quick to complain and to rebel whenever evil befalls him. He is quick to challenge God and the justice of His rule or to blaspheme and deny Him altogether. How few are the men who are deeply and continuously grateful for the abundant blessings with which their lives are daily endowed. How few are truly grateful for the gift of life, for the very privilege of being alive, for bread and water, for health, for the long, uncounted days of peace and tranquility, for love, for friendship, for hope, for dreams which quicken our days, for a life-mate, for children, for a mother's tenderness and a father's sacrifices, for trials which strengthen and sorrows which ennoble, for the glory of earth and sky and stars, for the beauty of the world's color and sound which pours into our souls through our eyes and our ears, for all the good and the great and the wise men who people our world and who minister to our needs, our health, our education, our guidance and our protection. Man is full of petitions and empty of gratitude. The baskets which are full-laden when they descend from heaven in answer to men's petitions are empty of all gratitude when they return to heaven.

Only after the poet has thus reflected upon the greatness of God, the majesty of His universe, and the smallness of man and his bitter ingratitude, does he feel himself properly attuned for the great act of Vidui - Confession.

"O my God, I know that my sins are too great to tell,
And my trespasses too many to remember,
Yet as a drop from the sea will I make mention of some,
And make confession of them;
Perhaps I shall silence the roar of their waves and their crashing,
"And Thou wilt hear from heaven and forgive."
I have trespassed against Thy law,
I have sespised Thy commandments,
I have abhorred them in my heart,
And with my mouth spoken slander.
I have committed iniquity,
And I have wrought evil,
I have been presumptuous,
I have done violence,
I have plastered over falsehood,
I have counselled evil,
I have lied, I have scoffed,
I have revolted, I have blasphemed,
I have been rebellious and perverse and sinful,
I have stiffened my neck,
I have loathed Thy rebukes and done wickedly,
I have corrupted my ways,
I have strayed from my paths,
I have transgressed and turned away from Thy commandments,
"But Thou art just in all that is come upon me
For Thou hast dealt truly and I have dealt wickedly."

What follows this tremendous Confession - this exposing of the innermost secrets of soul?

Self-contempt? Self-abasement? Spiritual prostration? A grovelling in the dust?

Not at all! Rather a retrieved spiritual stateliness and confidence.

The poet-worshipper returns to his home in God, like a king long exiled from his rightful domain.

For just as he is sure that man owes it to God to confess, so is he equally convinced that God owes it to man to forgive.



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"I will not let Thee go", he cries to his God, even as did Jacob of old on that lonely, dark night on the Jabok, "until Thou hast blessed me."

God must remember that man is not God. God Himself fashioned man out of dust. He put passions within his heart and strange, wandering fires. "His capacities are limited, his desires infinite." "From the day of his birth, he is hard-pressed and harrowed." There is hunger, thirst and cold. There is sickness and sorrow and wars and terrors. Man is not always ruler of his own life nor accountable for all his acts. Even by good intentions is man frequently misled and his very virtues often lead him into sin. Man's day is short, his work is hard and his masters are many and pressing.

The poet is confident that God who knows the heart of man and all of its heavy burdens will forgive all his sins. ^{is} He/therefore confident that when a man has purged himself of pride and ingratitude through a profound contemplation of the world about him and within him and has poured out his soul in fullest confession, he is completely redeemed and may be at peace with himself. God's love is infinite. "Why, even if God should pursue mine iniquity", cries the poet, "I will flee from Him to Him, and from His wrath, I will shelter myself in His shadow."

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This, my friends, is the message of Yom Kippur.

We are admonished to lift up our eyes from the little narrow world immediately surrounding us, from our own fussy little world of ambitions, cares and excitements which so completely absorbs us and upon which we concentrate so closely that we become spiritually near-sighted and to look up and out, to think of God and of His infinite universe, and of the immensities of time and space, the mystery of life and death and the enigma of human destiny. And in so doing we become aware of our own smallness and unworthiness, ^{our} and foolish pride and bitter ingratitude and the utter vanity of much of our seekings and

appraised ourselves properly and having
strivings. Then, having seen the true image of ourselves against the background of Reality, we shall then be prepared to confess our weaknesses and shortcomings and to seek a truer orientation in life.

The important thing is to have a true image of oneself.

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, dreamed a dream and his spirit was troubled. In his dream he saw a great image, and the appearance thereof was terrible. Its head was of gold - ~~and~~ its arms of silver - its belly of brass, its legs of iron, and its feet part of iron and part of clay. Then a stone fashioned by invisible hands smote the image upon its feet that were of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. Then was the clay, the iron, the brass, the silver and the gold broken in pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carried them away.

The dream which so greatly disturbed the King was interpreted to him by Daniel who "had understanding in all visions and dreams." The dream foretold the fortunes of Nebuchadnezzar's empire and what Kingdoms would rule over the world after him.

But this dream has an *intriguing* homily for us, spiritual and not political, revealing, if not *prognosticatory*. How many of us are fashioned like that image of Nebuchadnezzar? How many of us have the courage to acknowledge it? The head is of gold! All our thoughts are of gold. All our interests center in gold. All our standards of measuring and evaluating men - are by their gold contents. We think that we are free when we live in cages of gold. We think that we are worshipping God - when we are actually worshipping the golden calf.

The arms are of silver! Our arms are always reaching ^{out} after more and more wealth - Our strangest ambitions have to do not with being more but with having more. We toil and work and labor and sweat, and grow old before our time, and stretch our hearts and nerves to their breaking point - for what? ~~To~~ gain

wisdom and understanding, or peace, or love, or friendship, or the esteem of our fellow-men? Not at all! Idols of silver and idols of gold are driving us - mad, flagellant, devotees, through the few hectic years of our lives to our unhonored graves.

The belly is of brass! No human compassion, no consideration for others as we crash on to our selfish goals of wealth and power. How often do we trample over other lives to enrich our own? How often do we sacrifice all higher human obligations, all the tenderness, the warmth of which we are capable, for what we blindly call the demands of efficient business - which really means greater profit for ourselves - "Rabbi", a young man said to me over the telephone one day this week, "Rabbi, shall I work on Yom Kippur?" "Why, no", I said. "Jews do not work on Yom Kippur. It is our holiest day." "But if I do not work, I shall lose my job - my employer just told me so and my employer is a Jew!" The belly is of brass, the arms are of silver, and the head is of gold....

And its feet part of iron and part of clay! Clay! No convictions, no firm principles! No strong loyalties! Always when the head is of gold, the feet are of clay! - How often do we sacrifice justice, truth, honor, how often do we betray our own better selves, and the God who dwells in us to gain an advantage, to steal a march, to push ourselves up another rung and another rung on the ladder which reaches up to - nowhere!

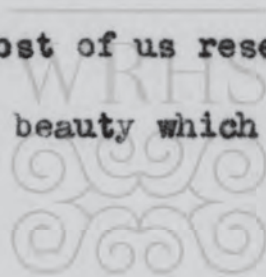
Is this a true image of ourselves - this dream-image of the Babylonian King who ended his days among the animals, a wild beast, like them? If it is - let us change it. For a stone, fashioned by invisible hands may smite this image upon its feet that are of iron and clay and break them in pieces and the wind will carry them away like chaff.

This is the whole meaning of Yom Kippur. This day was chosen according to our tradition, as a day of pardon and forgiveness because on it, God forgave

the children of Israel for having made and worshipped another God in His stead - the god called the Golden Calf!.....

The true image of a man should be a replica of God. God cannot be represented in things physical. Our mystics represented God as the source of a series of spiritual emanations - - potencies - attributes. They are wisdom - intelligence - love - justice - firmness - righteousness and so forth. The ideal man, the archetypal man, the Adam Kadmon, is modelled upon these attributes. As man takes on these attributes he comes to resemble the God who created him. These powers are within reach of every normal man and they constitute life's real values and its supreme rewards.

Yom Kippur thus turns our attention from the Golem-image of gold, silver, brass, iron and clay which most of us resemble in our daily lives, to the divine image of truth, goodness and beauty which all of us should aspire to reflect.



YK-36

ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER AT THE TEMPLE, ANSEL ROAD
AND EAST 105TH STREET ON YOM KIPPUR EVE. SEPTEMBER * 26, 1936

On the Day of Atonement we are admonished to lift up our eyes from the little narrow world immediately surrounding us, from our own fussy little world of ambitions, cares and excitements which so completely absorbs us and upon which we concentrate so closely that we become spiritually near-sighted and to look up and out, to think of God and of His infinite universe, of the immensities of time and space, the mystery of life and death and the enigma of human destiny. And in so doing, we become aware of our own smallness and unworthiness, our foolish pride and bitter ~~ingxxxix~~ ingratitude and the utter vanity of much of our seekings and strivings. Then, having appraised ourselves properly and having seen the true image of ourselves against the background of Reality, we shall then be prepared to confess our weaknesses and shortcomings and to seek a truer orientation in life.

Humbleness of spirit is the key which opens the sanctuary of the spiritual life. If one is to see visions and hear the voice of God, one must approach the burning bush of revelation in humility, with unshod feet as did Moses of old. Pride and arrogance bar the way to God. A man must realize first that he is dust and ashes before he can discover the glow of fire within the ashes.

"The wicked man because of the pride of his spirit cannot inquire; therefore God is never in any of his thoughts". There is no room for God in a heart swollen with pride; only in the contrite and broken heart does God dwell.

A realization of our ingratitude is likewise greatly helpful towards a true philosophy of life. Man is ever so quick to complain and to rebel whenever evil befalls him. He is quick to challenge God and the justice of His rule or to blaspheme and deny Him altogether. How few are the men who are deeply and continuously grateful for the abundant blessings with which their lives are daily

endowed. How few are truly grateful for the gift of life, for the very privilege of being alive, for bread and water, for health, for the long, uncounted days of peace and tranquility, for love, for friendship, for hope, for dreams which quicken our days, for a life-mate, for children, for a mother's tenderness and a father's sacrifices, for trials which strengthen and sorrows which ennoble, for the glory of earth and sky and stars, for the beauty of the world's color and sound which pours into our souls through our eyes and our ears, for all the good and the great and the wise men who people our world and who minister to our needs, our health, our education, our guidance and our protection. Man is full of petitions and empty of gratitude. The baskets which are ~~full-laden~~ full-laden when they descend from heaven in answer to men's ~~petitions~~ petitions are empty of all gratitude when they return to heaven.



1. No euphonia - death-cursives - Egyptians.
2. Occasional reminders - Wholesome
 - ① Man who thinks he will never
 - ② Accumulate - hang on - Possible shadows
 - ③ Live each day - (Just) Not post-humous -
- good to people - charity - now! will!
3. We are reminded of Inevitably - "the man" -
Teheran - "Angel of Death in Garden
Servant flies to Teheran"
4. Death keeps coming - great portion -
Eastern King - 500
"He was born - He suffered - He died"
5. Bitterness - Tree - Moses
→ אלהים אלהים - Faith - How
6. Death does not end usefulness - influence
Some one to carry on - child, friend Torch
Some where the song our life will echo
" " " choir
7. " " עצמאות בשר

Many have gone through life merely accumulating the instruments of life....There is none whose life does not look forward to the morrow. "What harm is there in this?" you ask. "Infinite harm; for such persons do not live but are preparing to live. They postpone everything."

"What man can you show me who places any value on his time, who reckons the work of each day, who understands that he is dieing daily for we are mistaken when we look forward to death; the major portion of death has already passed. Whatever years lie behind us are in the hands of death.



YOM KIPPUR - 1936

- 1- We have no confessionals in Judaism - Enumerate
- 2- For only as we have the courage
- 3- Every man quite naturally thinks well of himself
- 4- But this is the way of spiritual death - Exacting
- 5- Hence the Vidui - Genius - spare - Evasion
- 6- What then is the proper frame
- 7- The first part of the "Royal Crown 2 -- Through 400
- 8- { This meditation upon the might - induces - Humility
(quote) 2nd theme
- 9- { The poet is aware that humbleness - Dust שלך
הרץ
- 10- { As long as a man feels himself great
- 11- The poet then passes from contemplating -- God is
ingratitude -- Man is ever quick אלהים
אלהים
- 12- Only as the poet - Vidui.
(quote)
- 13- What follows this tremendous
- 14- For just as he is sure - God must remember
- 15- { The poet is therefore confident that God -
He is therefore also confident - For God's
love is infinite - from Him to Him
- 16- This, my friends, is the message - we are admonished
to lift up - appraised - אשר
אשר
- 17- The important thing is to have a true image -
Nebuchadnezzar.
- 18- But this dream has an intriguing

Silver - We Toil

Brass - Temple -2- Sacrifice ^u Rabbi ^u
Clay - "advantage" ^u "Charity" ^u

19- Is this a true image of ourselves - Beast

20- Stone This the whole meaning of Yom Kippur -- this day
was chosen

21- { The true image of a man -- replica of God --
God cannot be represented -- our mystics

22- { Yom Kippur thus turns our attention - Golem.



"God, I am ashamed and confounded
To stand before Thee knowing that even
As the might of Thy greatness
So is the utterness of my poverty and lowliness."

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"Thou are great, and Thou art wise, and Thou art God!
And I am but a clod, and a worm,
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A vessel full of shame,
A mute stone,
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"A wind that fleeth away and returneth not again".....
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And how much the more so after my death!
From nothing I came,
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- Poet - aware - Hebrew

"O my God, I know that my sins are too great to tell,
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I have stiffened my neck,
I have loathed Thy rebukes and done wickedly,
I have corrupted my ways,
I have strayed from ~~my~~ paths,
I have transgressed and turned away from Thy commandments,
~~"But Thou art just in all that is come upon me~~
~~For Thou hast dealt truly and I have dealt wickedly."~~

