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

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The ancient paths, 1936.

Address, Graduation exercises, The Hebrew Union College, May 23, 1956

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THE ANCIENT PATHS

DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

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Virgil concludes the fourth book of his Georgics with an epilogue in which he says: "Thus I sang of the care of fields, of cattle and of trees, while great Caesar thundered in war by deep Euphrates, and gave a victor's law unto willing nations and essayed the path to Olympus." While vast political events were sweeping by him, and mighty changes, affecting men and nations, were taking place all around him, the poet was content to sing of the tillage, of planting, of the rearing of cattle and the keeping of bees. This was due not so much to his love of "inglorious ease" as he himself modestly suggests—but, we suspect, to his intuitive surmise that here, in nature,—in fields, trees and cattle, in the revolving seasons, in the eternal life-hunger of living things, in death and resurrection—were the abiding realities of life, the facts which endure though all else changes, the things which survive the rise and fall of empires and mighty Caesars thundering by deep Euphrates.

Virgil's judgment seems sound. It is good for all men, and especially for leaders of men, in periods of ferment and upheaval, to keep steadily before their eyes and before the eyes of other men not so much the things which are timely as the things which are timeless.

One of the great gifts which any historic religion like ours brings to mankind is that it carries in its deep channels, steadily, safely and undeviatingly, certain timeless, quintessential truths, regardless of the roiling and foaming of the waters on the surface which may

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be lashed by the sudden gusts of winds or storms. The teachers of our religion, whether prophet, priest, or rabbi, spoke of ~~הַדָּרֹשׁ מִן הַקִּדְשׁ הַגָּדוֹל~~ "the ancient paths," ~~וְהַדָּרֹשׁ מִן הַקִּדְשׁ הַגָּדוֹל~~ "the dark sayings of old" — that which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us" — ~~הַדָּרֹשׁ מִן הַקִּדְשׁ הַגָּדוֹל~~ "the former things of old," not because they were slaves of tradition, but because they surmised that in them was a pattern of life and ideas not hastily or carelessly sketched by a passing day or a transient mood, but fashioned out of a vast millennial experience, a long and profound searching, one which had stood well the wear and test of time, and one which had been found by unnumbered generations to be the "good way," the way which gives rest to the tried souls of men and nations.

Our days are swept by revolution. Our world is not only restless with change, but the changes are sudden, swift and seemingly devoid of any informing principle, or definite goal. It is not at all clear whether these changes are prophecy of a new political and social cosmos or only the throes of a painful disintegration into chaos. Men and nations seem unable to find any strong, simple moral certainties to which to render their eager loyalties and upon which to build a positive and tranquil life. The air is filled with the din of many confused and confusing voices shouting their strident, violent messages. Everywhere there is great thundering by deep Euphrates.

At such times, the rabbi who wishes to serve men in their deepest needs will do well to stand fast by the classic traditions of his faith. I mean, the things which are unchangeable and perdurable in it, the values which are from everlasting to everlasting.

~~וְהַדָּרֹשׁ מִן הַקִּדְשׁ הַגָּדוֹל~~ Each age must have a spiritual leadership whose predominant occupation is responsive to its predominant need. At all times it is in the realm of *emphases* where the genius of true leadership lies. The role of the rabbi, broadly speaking, remains fairly constant through the ages and that role is fairly well defined. He is the expounder of the theology and ethics of Judaism, the interpreter of its law, and the spiritual guide of his people's communal life and institutions.

But each age has its own crisis and urgency. Each generation



has its own particular set of perplexities. This is particularly true of Jewish life. How frequent and sudden and radical are the changes which come over Jewish life in the diaspora. Between 1914 and 1934 alone—in 20 short years—the life and fortunes of more than half of the Jews of the world have been altered in such an amazing and drastic manner as to set at naught all former calculation and prognosis. Think of the transformations, political, economic and cultural, which have come over the lives of the three million Jews of Russia in the last two decades, and of the half-million Jews of Germany, and to a lesser degree, of the millions of Jews in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe! Think of the new diaspora which is fast being created today in countries and continents where Jewish settlements heretofore had been meager or hardly known! Contrast the fact of Palestine and of the Jewish national renaissance in the life of world Jewry today with what it was before the World War. Recall, if you can, American Jewish life of a generation ago—and contrast it with the magnitude, the complexity, the ferment and turbulence of it today!

And think with what desperate problems of survival—sheer political and economic survival—our present generation of Jews is being confronted in many parts of the world. There are powerful governments today which are bent upon the systematic destruction or as they would have it—elimination of their Jewish—not citizens any longer—but unwelcome aliens. They have a full-blown program of anti-Semitism, an anti-Semitic metaphysics, an apologetics and an elaborate technique. And Nazism, be it remembered, is not confined to Germany, though in Germany it has had its freest play and its most shameful victories. It is a plague of lethal ideas, sweeping over the world today, victimizing the Jew wherever it reaches, comparable to the centuries-lasting madness which was let loose upon Europe by the Crusades, and equally as menacing to the peace and security of our people.

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people is the most insecure of all. The times are desperately critical for all mankind—but most of all for that most sensitive seismograph of all mankind's earthquakes and disturbances—Israel.

A rabbi, therefore, entering upon his career in such a time of tribulation will, I believe, best fulfill his mission if he will set about to discover just what the predominant need of his age is, in the realm which he has made his own, and, upon such findings, determine what the predominant occupation of his leadership shall be. What does the world stand most in need of today? What does his people stand most in need of today? How can he, with that power of heart and mind, with which he has been endowed, and with that equipment of knowledge and insight which he has secured in this academy of learning, most directly, most relevantly, and most helpfully respond to those needs? What will be the burden of his message, the cry of his lips, the plea of his heart to his fellow men in these darkening days?

(c) Gal. 169

I regard the answers to these questions so paramount that I shall not dwell upon any of the other themes which a Baccalaureate address to a graduating class of rabbis normally is expected to dwell upon. I will not moralize about the qualities of character which are requisite for success in the ministry. I do not know what success in the ministry means. One of the most successful men in the ministry that I know of died of a broken heart. I will not admonish you to be strong and courageous in your advocacy of industrial justice and political integrity. You are already too old to have that quality grafted on to you if you do not already possess it. If one is at all morally sensitive—and if one is not, why, of all professions, should he choose the ministry?—he will soon discover for himself that the bitterest moments in a man's life are those which find him desecrating with his own hands the beautiful altars of his own moral integrity and quenching the proud fires of his own spiritual stateliness. I might be tempted to direct your attention to a bit of wisdom which most of us acquire only after we have badly bruised ourselves and others—that there is such a thing as "speaking the truth in love." Occasionally, the hot, impatient word will leap to our lips. Occasionally our hand will reach for the scorpion whip at the sight of outrageous wrong. But we should

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bring ourselves to remember that in the spiritual order it is the law of kindness which yields the ultimate victory. Our task is to persuade through reason, and, through love, win men over to our vision. And if we fail—and most of one's ministry is failure—and the nobler the ministry, the greater the failures, and the more precious and exalted the rare victories—we shall at least not have sanctioned by our example the technique of hate, bitterness, and spiritual violence which has gained such currency and approval among men and nations today.

I might also be tempted to dwell upon the pastoral element in your ministry, which in the eyes of many laymen in your future congregations will be regarded as your most important service to them. You will be admired for your eloquence, your scholarship, and your achievements, but you will be loved and blessed by grateful hearts for the helpful way in which you personally will bring light to them directly in their dark hours, for what you personally will mean to them and theirs as friend, counselor, and guide.

These and other themes are tremendously important and deserving of comment on an occasion such as this. But uppermost in my mind today, are not these thoughts but the thoughts of the temper of the world into which you are entering as ministers, the desperate spiritual crisis in our civilization, the life-and-death struggle which is raging today between the classic religious and moral tradition of mankind as represented by Judaism and the new paganism of power, dictatorship, state totalitarianism, militarism, and racialism which is sweeping the world. I cannot help but be apprehensive also concerning the quality of crisis and emergency which has entered Jewish life today. And I ask myself at this moment, watching the ordination of new rabbis in Israel, what shall a rabbi preach in these times? What shall be the center of gravity in his message and mission? Out of the treasure-trove of historic Jewish ideas, which shall he select to raise on high for ensign and banner to his troubled age?

The answer, it seems to me, is to be found in what I suggested a moment ago, in the *timeless* ideas of Judaism, in those truths which are from everlasting to everlasting. There are certain ideas or principles which are indispensable to any age regardless of its in-



tellectual, political, or economic complexion. Just as there are qualities of personal character which were precious in the sight of man five thousand years ago, and which will hold their identical worth among men ten thousand years hence—integrity, courage, loyalty, self-restraint, so there are values in the social life of the human race as a whole which are eternally precious, paramount, and permanent.

ancient paths

And these values—<sup>1</sup>unfortunately ignored, spurned, and denied by large sections of the world today, but which must nevertheless be defended and conserved at all cost if civilization is to endure—are, in very truth, the ~~ancient paths~~ of Judaism; and, today, in their hour of betrayal, these ideals call for their spokesmen and champions as never before.

Let me point to one or two of these essential and indispensable values. A sovereign thought in Judaism has been the supremacy of the moral law. There is a law—<sup>1</sup>eternally valid, written by God in the hearts of men, binding alike upon all men, and all nations. No one is exempt from the operation of this law—~~this law is not a law of the state, no class, no party, no government. Against that law, nations as well as individuals can and do sin—~~ ~~וְהָיָה כָּל אִשׁוֹתָיִם וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי מַלְכִּים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי חֲכָמִים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי עַמִּים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי מַלְכִּים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי חֲכָמִים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי עַמִּים~~ “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity”—and kings and noblemen and priests, and rich men, yes, and the poor and the proletariat. In the name of this supreme moral law, universally mandatory and exacting, a prophet could denounce a king—~~וְהָיָה כָּל אִשׁוֹתָיִם וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי מַלְכִּים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי חֲכָמִים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי עַמִּים~~ A Samuel could attack a Saul. Nathan could point the finger at King David and cry out, ~~וְהָיָה כָּל אִשׁוֹתָיִם וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי מַלְכִּים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי חֲכָמִים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי עַמִּים~~ “Thou art the man!” Elijah could summon Ahab to a dread accounting; ~~וְהָיָה כָּל אִשׁוֹתָיִם וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי מַלְכִּים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי חֲכָמִים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי עַמִּים~~ and Jeremiah could pronounce down upon Zedekiah, because “he humbled not himself before Jeremiah speaking in the name of the Lord.”

But the fearful heresy of our day proclaims not the supremacy of the moral law but the supremacy of the state or the nation. The state or nation can do no wrong. The party in control of the state can do no wrong. The party boss, the Duce, the Fuehrer, the commissar, can do no wrong. The eternal cry of the Jew through the ages has been not “There is no king but Caesar” but ~~וְהָיָה כָּל אִשׁוֹתָיִם וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי מַלְכִּים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי חֲכָמִים וְכָל אִשְׁתֵּי עַמִּים~~ “There is no King but Thee!” The new



paganism recognizes only one mortal sin for which a nation should do penance—the sin of having been defeated in battle and only one impartial judge above the nations, as one of the military expert of the Nazis declared, *success!* Since the Renaissance and the Reformation, since Machiavelli and Luther, the concept of state autonomy and self-sufficiency has fearfully advanced. Since Hegel and Fichte, the state has been apotheosized. The state is itself the right. It is the origin as well as the goal of all morality, and conformity with state ends is conformity with the moral law. State absolutism is steadily degrading morality to political strategy, and robbing man of his freedom and his dignity.

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There is here, as in other fields, an irreconcilable antithesis between the classic Jewish tradition and the new paganism. The perspicacious among the new pagans know it. That is why the Nazis, for example, have centered their bitterest attacks upon the Jew and Judaism, and upon the Old Testament.

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Under our tradition the function of the state is to preserve law and order and to insure the largest measure of justice among men. Under the new dispensation, the function of the state is conquest through war. Its spirit is the "Wehrgeist." The goal of all education is "Wehrhaftigkeit." "Battle is the divine business of every German." In Italy children are trained from infancy in the science of soldiering. "In pre-war days, in Europe," writes Franz Werfel, "soldiers marched because they had to; now boys of twelve march for the fun of it." In contrast to this mystic adoration of force, of "schrecklichkeit" and of brandishing of fists, our tradition proclaims

speaks the truth in love.

לא נבחר. The goal of our education is ~~וכבודו הרבותם לאחים~~. Our tradition proclaims the redemptive and healing power of love. "Love thy neighbor." "Love the stranger." The new paganism proclaims the principle of hate, of class struggle, of irreconcilable national ambitions, of xenophobia.

Our tradition speaks of humility, individual and collective. "The humble shall inherit the earth." ~~ההשפלה רמה~~. The new order is blatantly and vulgarly arrogant in its conceits, claims and pretensions. Dictators everywhere are inflating their peoples with the most boorish and indecent sort of national chauvinism, racial vanity, and class intransigence.



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Our tradition speaks of the dignity of the individual. Our Torah begins with the creation of one man and ends with the death of one man. The first man was fashioned in the image of God. The second was one whom the Lord knew face to face. Man is significant in our tradition. ~~אין אשה אלהים חכם ובעל עליו כלכם~~ Every individual has the right to say, "for my sake was the world created." Every man is a unique event in the world. When one sees a great concourse of people, he should thank God for not having made them all of one mind. In the new emergent world, men are being driven back into herd mores, into dread conformity. They are being reconditioned into mass reactions. A fearful robotism is the clear objective of the modern totalitarian state.

Thus the very basic doctrines of our faith, the salient principles of our spiritual and moral tradition, are being challenged in our day by powerful, ruthless, and determined forces who are again worshipping the unclean spirit, ~~הוא לא יאמר~~. And these forces are scoring one victory after another.

The rabbi, therefore, who is heir of prophet, priest, and psalmist, who chooses to walk with them, ~~הוא לא יאמר~~ will in this hour of dread decision for mankind, preach, teach, and proclaim most of all and above all these ancient truths with an earnestness and a vigor, with an eagerness and exaltation as if they were new revelations just come down to man, calculated to shake the very foundations of the world.

There is an untamed and amazingly dogmatic romanticism abroad in the world today, and this turgid, headlong romanticism, born out of the "maranatha" complex, out of excessive messianic expectations in the fields of politics and economics, has a tendency to make the classic ideals and standards of mankind seem old indeed, in fact, antiquated. That has happened before. The nineteenth century believed that the laboratory would yield all truth. The twentieth century believed that the machine would achieve all good. Both hopes have proved vain, but ere life exposed their vanity, they had a way of making the old codes and convictions of historic religions look outworn and slightly ridiculous. But they were not outworn. They were not old. They were not young. They are eternal. And they are unsensational, quite as unsensational as a mathematical



formula, quite like the mathematical formulae to which physicists are now attempting to reduce this whole complex and exciting universe of ours. To these unsensational and eternal truths of his religious culture, the rabbi should most fervently address himself today and proclaim them with renewed emphasis to the world.

And to his own people, the rabbi would do well to bring today a message of comfort and confidence. There is a time to chide and a time to soothe. The harassed soul of Israel today needs the healing, comforting word. It needs morale. It needs the reassurance of a resplendent destiny, of ultimate victory, of the sheltering wings of God. In the hour of Israel's prosperity and power, our ancient prophets castigated their people, but in its dark hour of sorrow, defeat and exile, they spoke with a compassionate tenderness. They spoke of resurrection, of vindication, of restoration. Their banner over their people was Love. The Synagogue should, in these days, be a place of spiritual refuge and heartening. From the pulpit should come to our people not querulousness and censoriousness and partisanship and spluttering polemics and the bitterness of an impatient or disappointed spirit—"we walk no better for abusing our crutches"—but the strong, confident faith, the gladdening word of hope and the wise, practical guidance and instruction. In such times as these, I suspect that our people stands in greater need of sages than of prophets.

The rabbi today should quietly and patiently strengthen the strongholds of Jewish life and the bulwarks of Jewish survival agencies. We do not need today a new philosophy of Jewish life, a new set of concepts and definitions to play around with. It is not Judaism which needs reconstruction today but ourselves. Of course, we are in an age of transition. We always have been. The gloomy Dean Inge opines that when Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, Adam turned to Eve and said:—"My dear, we are now definitely entering upon an age of transition." Of course we must make adjustments to changed conditions. But Jewish survival owes far more to our people's *refusal* to make hasty and temporary adjustments, to <sup>their</sup> an obdurate insistence upon the eternity and unchangeability of the basic teachings of Judaism—~~שואת התורה לא~~ ~~היא מחלפת~~—than to any facile and accommodating adjustability.



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We need today planned and intensive cultivation of the marvelous spiritual and cultural legacy which is ours, energetic dissemination of our eternal teachings. We need training, up-building and organization.

The rabbi today should strive not for unity in Israel—a task quite impossible of achievement among our people or among any other people—but for a maximum measure of cooperation on the basis of common needs and obligations. He should foster among his people the larger loyalty to the whole House of Israel—here and abroad—and the sense of a common destiny. Provincialism and protective isolationism are no longer possible for any Jewish community in the world today. The rabbi should encourage the cooperation of his people in the up-building of the Jewish Homeland in Palestine—not because that is the solution of the Jewish problem—there is no one solution—for there is no one Jewish problem—nor because he is enamoured of nationalism, which has more or less run riot in the modern world—nor yet because he feels that the Galut is liquidating and that there is no longer any hope for Jewish communities in the Diaspora—that is a too-hasty reading both of past and of contemporaneous Jewish history as well as of the history of mankind, but because a Jewish Homeland will help to normalize the status of our people in the world, because it will remove the element of desperation—of fighting with our backs to the wall—from our renewed struggle for equality and emancipation, which the world has again forced upon us, because it will serve as a haven for hosts of our people who must now seek new homes in a world where doors are everywhere closing, and because this Jewish Homeland may become in the days to come a vast dynamo of creative Jewish cultural and spiritual energies.

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He should encourage their cooperation

A great hour awaits you, my friends, and you will be matched with this hour. It is a time ~~אם המלחמה~~ when Kings go forth to battle and mighty armies close in desperate combat. But you are to be rabbis, leaders of a people whose very name—Israel—means wrestling with angels and demons and mastering them. You are to be the teachers of the Torah, and of such it was said long ago: ~~כל מי שעוסק בתלמוד תורה הרי זה מנהל~~ "whoever devotes himself to the Torah, he shall triumph in the end."

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# THE ANCIENT PATHS

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## THE ANCIENT PATHS

DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

Virgil concludes the fourth book of his Georgics with an epilogue in which he says: "Thus I sang of the care of fields, of cattle and of trees, while great Caesar thundered in war by deep Euphrates, and gave a victor's law unto willing nations and essayed the path to Olympus." While vast political events were sweeping by him, and mighty changes, affecting men and nations, were taking place all around him, the poet was content to sing of the tillage, of planting, of the rearing of cattle and the keeping of bees. This was due not so much to his life of "inglorious ease"—as he himself modestly suggests—but, we suspect, to his intuitive surmise that here, in nature,—in fields, trees and cattle, in the revolving seasons, in the eternal life-hunger of living things, in death and resurrection—were the abiding realities of life, the facts which endure though all else changes, the things which survive the rise and fall of empires and mighty Caesars thundering by deep Euphrates.

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At such times, the rabbi who wishes to serve men in their deepest needs will do well to stand fast by the classic traditions of his faith. I mean, the things which are unchangeable and perdurable in it, the values which are from everlasting to everlasting.

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people is the most insecure of all. The times are desperately critical for all mankind—but most of all for that most sensitive seismograph of all mankind's earthquakes and disturbances—Israel.

A rabbi, therefore, entering upon his career in such a time of tribulation will, I believe, best fulfil his mission if he will set about to discover just what the predominant need of his age is, in the realm which he has made his own, and, upon such findings, determine what the predominant occupation of his leadership shall be. What does the world stand most in need of today? What does his people stand most in need of today? How can he, with that power of heart and mind, with which he has been endowed, and with that equipment of knowledge and insight which he has secured in this academy of learning, most directly, most relevantly, and most helpfully respond to those needs? What will be the burden of his message, the cry of his lips, the plea of his heart to his fellow men in these darkening days?

I regard the answers to these questions so paramount that I shall not dwell upon any of the other themes which a Baccalaureate address to a graduating class of rabbis normally is expected to dwell upon. I will not moralize about the qualities of character which are requisite for success in the ministry. I do not know what success in the ministry means. One of the most successful men in the ministry that I know of died of a broken heart. I will not admonish you to be strong and courageous in your advocacy of industrial justice and political integrity. You are already too old to have that quality grafted on to you if you do not already possess it. If one is at all morally sensitive—and if one is not, why, of all professions, should he choose the ministry—he will soon discover for himself that the bitterest moments in a man's life are those which find him desecrating with his own hands the beautiful altars of his own ~~career~~ and quenching the proud fires of his own spiritual stateliness. I might be tempted to direct your attention to a bit of wisdom which most of us acquire only after we have badly bruised ourselves and others—that there is such a thing as "speaking the truth in love." Occasionally, the hot, impatient word will leap to our lips. Occasionally our hand will reach for the scorpion whip at the sight of outrageous wrong. But we should

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bring ourselves to remember that in the spiritual order it is the law of kindness which yields the ultimate victory. Our task is to persuade through reason, and, through love, win men over to our vision. And if we fail—and most of one's ministry is failure—and the nobler the ministry, the greater the failures, and the more precious and exalted the rare victories—we shall at least not have sanctioned by our example the technique of hate, bitterness and spiritual violence which has gained such currency and approval among men and nations today.

I might also be tempted to dwell upon the pastoral element in your ministry which in the eyes of many laymen in your future congregations will be regarded as your most important service to them. You will be admired for your eloquence, your scholarship and your achievements but you will be loved and blessed by grateful hearts for the helpful way in which you personally brought light to them directly in their dark hours, for what you meant to them and theirs ~~personally~~ as friend, counsellor and guide.

These and other themes are tremendously important and deserving of comment on an occasion such as this. But uppermost in my mind today, are not these thoughts but the thoughts of the temper of the world into which you are entering as ministers: the desperate spiritual crisis in our civilization, the life-and-death struggle which is raging today between the classic religious and moral tradition of mankind as represented by Judaism and the new paganism of power, dictatorship, state totalitarianism, militarism, and racialism which is sweeping the world. I cannot help but be apprehensive concerning the quality of crisis and emergency which has entered Jewish life today. And I ask myself at this moment, watching the ordination of new rabbis in Israel, what shall a rabbi preach in these times? What shall be the center of gravity in his message and mission? Out of the treasure-trove of historic Jewish ideas, which shall he select to raise on high for ensign and banner to his troubled age?

The answer, it seems to me, is to be found in what I suggested a moment ago, in the timeless idea of Judaism, in those truths which are from everlasting to everlasting. There are certain ideas or principles which are indispensable to any age regardless of its in-

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tellectual, political or economic complexion. Just as there are qualities of personal character which were precious in the sight of man 5000 years ago, and which will hold their identical worth among men 10,000 years hence—integrity, courage, loyalty, self-restraint,—so there are values in the social life of the human race as a whole which are eternally precious, paramount and permanent.

And these values—unfortunately ignored, spurned and denied by large sections of the world today, but which must nevertheless be defended and conserved at all cost if civilization is to endure—are, in very truth, the נתיבות עולם of Judaism; and, today, in their hour of betrayal, these ideals call for their spokesmen and champions as never before.

Let me point to one or two of these essential and indispensable values. A sovereign thought in Judaism is the supremacy of the moral law. There is a law—eternally valid, written by God in the hearts of men, binding alike upon all men, and all nations. No one is exempt from the operation of this law—this, ~~הנהגה אמת וישרה~~ ~~אמת~~—no state, no class, no party, no government. Against that law, nations as well as individuals can and do sin—~~הנהגה אמת וישרה~~ "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity," and kings and noblemen and priests and rich men, yes, and the poor and the proletariat. . . . In the name of this supreme moral law, universally mandatory and exacting, a prophet could denounce a king—~~ואדבר בהעדרך~~ ~~ואדבר בהעדרך~~ Samuel could attack a Saul. Nathan could point the finger at King David and cry out ~~אתה האיש~~ "Thou art the man!" Elijah could summon Ahab to a dread accounting; ~~הרצחת נפש~~ and Jeremiah could pronounce down upon Zedekiah, because "he humbled not himself before Jeremiah speaking in the name of the Lord."

But the fearful heresy of our day proclaims not the supremacy of the moral law but the supremacy of the state or the nation. The state or nation can do no wrong. The party in control of the state can do no wrong. The party boss, the Duce, the Fuehrer, the commissar, can do no wrong. The eternal cry of the Jew through the ages has been not "There is no king but Caesar" but ~~אין לנו מלך אלא אתה~~ "There is no King but Thee!" The new paganism recognizes only one mortal sin for which a nation should

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do penance—the sin of having been defeated in battle. And only one impartial judge above the nations, as one of the military expert of the Nazis declared,—*success!* Since the Renaissance and the Reformation, since Machiavelli and Luther, the concept of state autonomy and self-sufficiency has fearfully advanced. Since Hegel and Fichte, the state has been apotheosized. The state is itself the right. It is the origin as well as the goal of all morality, and conformity with state ends is conformity with the moral law. State absolutism is steadily degrading morality to political strategy, and robbing man of his freedom and his dignity.

There is here, as in other fields, an irreconcilable antithesis between the classic Jewish tradition and the new paganism. The perspicacious among the new pagans know it. That is why the Nazis, for example, have centered their bitterest attacks upon the Jew and Judaism, and upon the Old Testament. Under our tradition the function of the state is to preserve law and order and to insure the largest measure of justice among men. Under the new dispensation, the function of the state is conquest through war. Its spirit is the "Wehrgeist." The goal of all education is "Wehrhaftigkeit." "Battle is the divine business of every German." In Italy children are trained from infancy in the science of soldiering. "In pre-war days, in Europe," writes Franz Werfel, "soldiers marched because they had to; now boys of 12 march for the fun of it." In contrast to this mystic adoration of force, of "schrecklichkeit" and of brandishing of fists, our tradition proclaims the goal of our education is וְכַתְּבוּ חֻמְרוֹת וְאֵת. Our tradition proclaims the redemptive and healing power of love. "Love thy neighbor." "Love the stranger." The new paganism proclaims the principle of hate, of class struggle, of irreconcilable national ambitions, of xenophobia.

Our tradition speaks of humility, individual and collective. "The humble shall inherit the earth." הַנֶּשֶׁפֶל רוּחַ. The new order is blatantly and vulgarly arrogant in its conceits, claims and pretensions. Dictators everywhere are inflating their peoples with the most boorish and indecent sort of national chauvinism, racial vanity and class intransigence.

Our tradition speaks of the dignity of the individual. Our Torah

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begins with the creation of one and ends with the death of one man. The first man was fashioned in the image of God. The second was one whom the Lord knew face to face. Man is significant in our tradition. אֲנִי אֹמֵר אֱלֹהִים אִתְּךָ וְכִי עָלֶיךָ כָּלֶכֶם. Every individual has the right to say "for my sake was the world created." Every man is a unique event in the world. When one sees a great concourse of people, he should thank God for not having made them all of one mind. In the new emergent world, men are being driven back into herd mores, into dread conformity. They are being re-conditioned into mass reactions. A fearful robotism is the clear objective of the modern totalitarian state.

Thus the very basic doctrines of our faith, the salient principles of our spiritual and moral tradition are being challenged in our day by powerful, ruthless and determined forces who are again worshipping the unclean spirit לֹא אֱלֹהִים. And these forces are scoring one victory after another.

The rabbi, therefore, who is heir of prophet, priest, and psalmist, who chooses to walk with them the נְחִיבוֹת עוֹלָם will in this hour of dread decision for mankind, preach, teach, proclaim most of all and above all these ancient truths with an earnestness and a vigor, with an eagerness and exaltation as if they were new revelations just come down to man, calculated to shake the very foundations of the world.

There is an untamed and amazingly dogmatic romanticism abroad in the world today and this turgid, headlong romanticism born out of the "maranatha" complex, out of excessive messianic expectations in the fields of politics and economics, has a tendency to make the classic ideals and standards of mankind seem old indeed, in fact, antiquated. That has happened before. The nineteenth century believed that the laboratory would yield all truth. The twentieth century believed that the machine would achieve all good. Both hopes have proved vain but ere life exposed their vanity, they had a way of making the old codes and convictions of historic religions look outworn and slightly ridiculous. But they were not outworn. They were not old. They were not young. They are eternal. And they are unsensational, quite as unsensational as a mathematical formula, quite like the mathematical formulae to which physicists

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are now attempting to reduce this whole complex and exciting universe of ours. To these unsensational and eternal truths of his religious culture, the rabbi should most fervently address himself today and proclaim them with renewed emphasis to the world.

And to his own people, the rabbi would do well to bring today a message of comfort and confidence. There is a time to chide and a time to soothe. The harassed soul of Israel today needs the healing, comforting word. It needs morale. It needs the reassurance of a resplendent destiny, of ultimate victory, of the sheltering wings of God. In the hour of Israel's prosperity and power, our ancient prophets castigated their people but in its dark hour of sorrow, defeat and exile, they spoke with a compassionate tenderness. They spoke of resurrection, of vindication, of restoration. Their banner over their people was Love. The Synagogue should, in these days, be a place of spiritual refuge and heartening. From the pulpit should come to our people not querulousness and censoriousness and partisanship and spluttering polemics and the bitterness of an impatient or disappointed spirit—"We walk no better for abusing our crutches"—but the strong, confident faith, the gladdening word of hope and the wise, practical guidance and instruction. In such times as these, I suspect that our people stand in greater need of sages than of prophets.

The rabbi today should quietly and patiently strengthen the strongholds of Jewish life and the bulwarks of Jewish vital agencies. We do not need today a new philosophy of Jewish life, a new set of concepts and definitions to play around with. It is not Judaism which needs reconstruction today but ourselves. Of course, we are in an age of transition. We always have been. The gloomy Dean Inge opines that when Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, Adam turned to Eve and said:—"My dear, we are now entering upon an age of transition." Of course we must make adjustments to changed conditions. But Jewish survival owes far more to our people's refusal to make hasty and temporary adjustments, to an obdurate insistence on the eternity and unchangeability of the basic teachings of Judaism—שְׁמַע הַתּוֹרָה לֹא תִהְיֶה מְחַלְפֶּת—than to any facile and accommodating adjustability. We need today planned and intensive cultivation of the marvelous/spiritual

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and cultural legacy which is ours, energetic dissemination of our eternal teachings, training, up-building and organization.

The rabbi today should strive not for unity in Israel—a task quite impossible of achievement among our people or among any other people—but for a maximum measure of cooperation on the basis of common needs and obligations. He should foster among his people the larger loyalty to the whole House of Israel—here and abroad—and the sense of a common destiny. Provincialism and protective isolationism are no longer possible for any Jewish community in the world today. The rabbi should encourage the cooperation of his people in the up-building of the Jewish Homeland in Palestine—not because that is *the* solution of the Jewish problem—there is no one solution—for ~~there~~ is no one Jewish problem—nor because he is enamoured of nationalism, which has more or less run riot in the modern world—nor yet because he feels that the Galut is liquidating and that there is no longer any hope for Jewish communities in the Diaspora—that is a too-hasty reading both of past and of contemporaneous Jewish history as well as of the history of mankind, but because a Jewish Homeland will help to normalize the status of our people in the world, because it will remove the element of desperation—of fighting with our backs to the wall—from our renewed struggle for equality and emancipation, which the world has again forced upon us, because it will serve as a haven for hosts of our people who must now seek new homes in a world where doors are everywhere closing, and because this Jewish Homeland may become in the days to come a vast dynamo of creative Jewish cultural and spiritual energies.

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A great hour awaits you, my friends, and you will be matched with this hour. It is a time of **עת צאת המלכים** when Kings go forth to battle and mighty armies close in desperate combat. But you are to be rabbis, leaders of a people whose very name—Israel—means wrestling with angels and demons and mastering them. You are to be the teachers of the Torah and of such it was said long ago: **כל מי שעוסק בלמוד תורה הרי זה מתעלה** "whoever devoted himself to the Torah, he shall triumph in the end."

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BACCALAUREATE ADDRESS

Delivered By  
Dr. Abba Hillel Silver,  
Cleveland, Ohio

At  
Graduation Exercises  
of  
The Hebrew Union College,  
Cincinnati, Ohio

On  
Saturday, May 23, 1936





Virgil concludes the fourth book of his Georgics with an epilogue in which he says: "Thus I sang of the care of fields, of cattle and of trees, while great Caesar thundered in war by deep Euphrates, and gave a victor's law unto willing nations and essayed the path to Olympus." While vast political events were sweeping by him, and mighty changes, affecting men and nations, were taking place all around him, the poet was content to sing of the tillage, of planting, of the rearing of cattle and the keeping of bees. This was due not so much to his love of "inglorious ease" - as he himself modestly suggests - but, we suspect, to his intuitive surmise that here, in nature, - in fields, trees and cattle, in the revolving seasons, in the eternal life-hunger of living things, in death and resurrection - were the abiding realities of life, the facts which endure though all else changes, the things which survive the rise and fall of empires and mighty Caesars thundering by deep Euphrates.

Virgil's judgment seems sound. It is good for all men, and especially for leaders of men, in periods of ferment and upheaval, to keep steadily before their eyes and before the eyes of other men not so much the things which are timely as the things which are timeless.

One of the great gifts which an historic religion like ours brings to mankind is that it carries in its deep channels, steadily, safely and undeviatingly, certain timeless, quintessential truths, regardless of the roiling and foaming of the waters on the surface which may be lashed by the sudden gusts of winds or storms. The teachers of our religion - whether prophet, priest or rabbi, spoke of the "the ancient paths", the "the dark sayings of old - that which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us" -



the - "the former things of old", not because they were slaves of tradition, but because they surmised that in them was a pattern of life and ideas not hastily or carelessly sketched by a passing day or a transient mood, but fashioned out of a vast millennial experience, a long and profound searching, one which had stood well the wear and test of time, one which had been found by unnumbered generations to be the "good way", the way which gives rest to the tried souls of men and nations.

Our days are swept by revolution. Our world is not only restless with change, but the changes are sudden, swift and seemingly devoid of any informing principle, or definite goal. It is not at all clear whether these changes are prophecy of a new political and social cosmos or only the throes of a painful disintegration into chaos. Men and nations seem unable to find any strong, simple moral certainties to which to render their eager loyalties and upon which to build a positive and tranquil life. The air is filled with the din of many confused and confusing voices shouting their strident, violent messages. thundering by deep Euphrates... Everywhere there is a great/

At such times, the rabbi who wishes to serve men in their deepest <sup>to</sup> needs will do well/stand fast by the classic traditions of his faith. I mean, the things which are unchangeable and perdurable in it, the values which are from everlasting to everlasting.

. Each age must have a spiritual leadership whose predominant occupation is responsive to its predominant need. At all times it is in the realm of emphases where the genius of true leadership lies. The role of the rabbi, broadly speaking, remains fairly constant through the ages and that role is fairly well defined. He is the expounder



of the theology and ethics of Judaism, the interpreter of its law, and the spiritual guide of his people's communal life and institutions.

But each age has its own crisis and urgency. Each generation has its own particular set of perplexities. This is particularly true of Jewish life. How frequent and sudden and radical are the changes which come over Jewish life in the diaspora. Between 1914 and 1934 alone - in 20 short years - the life and fortunes of more than half of the Jews of the world have been altered in such an amazing and drastic manner as to set at naught all former calculation and prognosis. Think of the transformations, political, economic and cultural, which have come over the lives of the three million Jews of Russia in the last two decades, and the half million Jews of Germany, and to a lesser degree, the millions of Jews in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe! Think of the new diaspora which is fast being created today in countries and continents where Jewish settlements heretofore had been meager or hardly known! Contrast the fact of Palestine and of the Jewish national renaissance in the life of world Jewry today with what it was before the World War. Recall, if you can, American Jewish life of a generation ago - and contrast it with the magnitude, the complexity, the ferment and turbulence of it today!

And think with what desperate problems of survival - sheer political and economic survival - our present generation of Jews is being confronted in many parts of the world. There are powerful governments today which are bent upon the systematic destruction or as they would have it - elimination of their Jewish - not citizens any longer - but unwelcome aliens. They have a full-blown program of anti-Semitism, an anti-Semitic metaphysics, an apologetics and an elaborate technique. And Nazism, be it



remembered, is not confined to Germany, though in Germany it has had its freest play and its most shameful victories. It is a plague of lethal ideas, sweeping over the world today, victimizing the Jew wherever it reaches, comparable to the centuries - lasting madness which was let loose upon Europe by the Crusades, and equally as menacing to the peace and security of our people.

No government is quite secure today. No people is quite certain of its tomorrow. Nations have simply despaired of planning their future. They live, as it were, from hand to mouth. Each day is a day which brings them nearer to war or revolution. And in the midst of this universal insecurity and instability, the lot of our people is the most insecure of all. The times are desperately critical for all mankind - but most of all for that most sensitive seismograph of all mankind's earthquakes and disturbances - Israel.

A rabbi, therefore, entering upon his career in such a time of tribulation will, I believe, best fulfil his mission if he will set about to discover just what the predominant need of his age is, in the realm which he has made his own, and, upon such findings, determine what the predominant occupation of his leadership shall be. What does the world stand most in need of today? What does his people stand most in need of today? How can he, with that power of heart and mind, with which he has been endowed, and with that equipment of knowledge and insight which he has secured in this academy of learning, most directly, most relevantly, and most helpfully respond to those needs? What will be the burden of his message, the cry of his lips, the plea of his heart to his fellow men in these darkening days?



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The answer, it seems to me, is to be found in what I suggested a moment ago, in the timeless idea of Judaism, in those truths which are from everlasting to everlasting. There are certain ideas or principles which are indispensable to any age regardless of its intellectual, political or economic complexion. Just as there are qualities of personal character which were precious in the sight of man 5000 years ago, and which will hold their identical worth among men 10,000 years hence - integrity, courage, loyalty, self-restraint, - so there are values in the social life of the human race as a whole which are eternally precious, paramount and permanent.

And these values - unfortunately ignored, spurned and denied by large sections of the world today, but which must nevertheless be defended and conserved at all cost if civilization is to endure - are, in very truth, the of Judaism; and, today, in their hour of betrayal, these ideals call for their spokesmen and champions as never before.

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The rabbi today should quietly and patiently strengthen the strongholds of Jewish life and the bulwarks of Jewish revival agencies. We do not need today a new philosophy of Jewish life, a new set of concepts and definitions to play around with. It is not Judaism which needs reconstruction today but ourselves. Of course, we are in an age



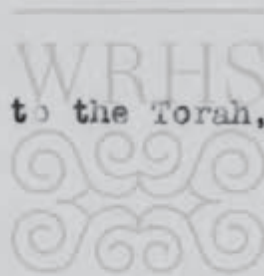
of transition. We always have been. The gloomy Dean Inge opines that when Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, Adam turned to Eve and said: - "My dear, we are now entering upon an age of transition". Of course we must make adjustments to changed conditions. But Jewish survival owes far more to our people's refusal to make hasty and temporary adjustments, to an obdurate insistence on the eternity and unchangeability of the basic teachings of Judaism than to any facile and accommodating adjustability. We need today planned and intensive cultivation of the marvelous spiritual and cultural legacy which is ours, energetic dissemination of our eternal teachings, training, up-building and organization.

The rabbi today should strive not for unity in Israel - a task quite impossible of achievement among our people or among any other people - but for a maximum measure of cooperation on the basis of common needs and obligations. He should foster among his people the larger loyalty to the whole House of Israel - here and abroad - and the sense of a common destiny. Provincialism and protective isolationism are no longer possible for any Jewish community in the world today. The rabbi should encourage the cooperation of his people in the up-building of the Jewish Homeland in Palestine - not because that is the solution of the Jewish problem - there is no one solution - for there is no one Jewish problem - nor because he is enamoured of nationalism, which has more or less run riot in the modern world - nor yet because he feels that the Galut is liquidating and that there is no longer any hope for Jewish communities in the Diaspora - that is, a too-hasty reading both of past and of contemporaneous Jewish history as well as of the history of mankind, but because a Jewish Homeland will help to normalize the status of our people in the world, because it will remove the element of desperation - of fighting with our backs to the wall - from our renewed struggle



for equality and emancipation, which the world has again forced upon us, because it will serve as a haven for hosts of our people who must now seek new homes in a world where doors are everywhere closing, and because this Jewish Homeland may become in the days to come a vast dynamo of creative Jewish cultural and spiritual energies.

A great hour awaits you, my friends, and you will be matched with this hour - It is a time when Kings go forth to battle and mighty armies close in desperate combat. But you are to be rabbis, leaders of a people whose very name - Israel - means wrestling with angels and demons and mastering them. You are to be the teachers of the Torah and of such it was said long ago "whoever devoted himself to the Torah, he shall triumph in the end."





Virgil concludes the fourth book of his Georgics with an epilogue in which he says: "Thus I sang of the care of fields, of cattle and of trees, while great Caesar thundered in war by deep Euphrates, and gave a victor's law unto willing nations and essayed the path to Olympus." While vast political events were sweeping by him, and mighty changes, affecting men and nations, were taking place all around him, the poet was content to sing of the tillage, of planting, of the rearing of cattle and the keeping of bees. This was due not so much to his love of "inglorious ease" - as he himself modestly suggests - but, we suspect, to his intuitive surmise that here, in nature, - in fields, trees and cattle, in the revolving seasons, in the eternal life-hunger of living things, in death and resurrection - were the abiding realities of life, the facts which endure though all else changes, the things which survive the rise and fall of empires and mighty Caesars thundering by deep Euphrates.

Virgil's judgment seems sound. It is good for all men, and especially for leaders of men, in periods of ferment and upheaval, to keep steadily before their eyes and before the eyes of other men not so much the things which are timely as the things which are timeless.

One of the great gifts which an historic religion like ours brings to mankind is that it carries in its deep channels, steadily, safely and undeviatingly, certain timeless, quintessential truths, regardless of the - roiling and foaming of the waters on the surface which may be lashed by - sudden gusts of winds or storms. The teachers of our religion - whether prophet, priest or rabbi, spoke of the *דרכי אבות* "the ancient paths", the *אמרי אבות* "the dark sayings of old - that which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us" - "the *אמרי אבות*



- "the former things of old", - not because they were slaves of tradition, but because they surmised that in them was a pattern of life and ideas not hastily or carelessly sketched by a passing day or a transient mood, but fashioned out of a vast millennial experience, a long and profound searching, one which had stood the <sup>well</sup> war and test of time, <sup>one which had been</sup> and ~~was~~ found by unnumbered generations to be the "good way", the way which gives ענין זה rest to the tried souls of men and nations.

Our days are swept by revolution. Our world is not only restless with change, but the changes are sudden, swift and seemingly devoid of any informing principle, or definite goal. It is not at all clear whether these changes are prophecy of a new political and social cosmos ~~in the making~~ or only the <sup>throes</sup> ~~spasms~~ of a painful disintegration into chaos. Men and nations seem unable to find any strong, simple moral certainties to which to render their eager loyalties and upon which to build a positive and tranquil life. The air is filled with the din of many confused and confusing voices shouting their strident, violent messages. (Everywhere there is great thundering by deep Euphrates...)

At such times, the <sup>rabbi</sup> ~~minister~~ who wishes to serve men in their deepest needs will do well to stand fast by the classic traditions of his faith. I mean, the ~~it~~ things which are unchangeable and perdurable in <sup>it</sup> ~~them~~, the values which are from everlasting to everlasting.

(לכל) 1/2 1/3 Each age must have a spiritual leadership whose predominant occupation is responsive to its predominant need. At all times, it is in the realm of emphases where the genius of true leadership lies. The role of the rabbi, broadly speaking, remains fairly constant through the ages and that role is fairly well defined. He is the expounder of the



theology and the ethics of Judaism, the interpreter of its law, and the spiritual guide of <sup>this people's</sup> Jewish communal life and institutions.

But each age has its own crisis and urgency. Each generation <sup>has</sup> its own particular set of perplexities. This is particularly true of Jewish life. How frequent and sudden <sup>and radical</sup> are the changes which come over Jewish life in the diaspora. Between 1914 and 1934 <sup>alone</sup> - in 20 short years - the life and fortunes of more than half of the Jews of the world have been altered in such an amazing, ~~thorough~~ and drastic manner, as to set at naught all former calculation and *prognosis*. Think of the transformations, political, economic and cultural, which have come over the lives of the three million Jews of Russia in the last two decades, and the half million Jews of Germany, and to a lesser degree, the millions of Jews <sup>in</sup> of the other countries *of* ~~in~~ Central and Eastern Europe! Think of the new diaspora which is fast being created today in countries and continents where Jewish settlements heretofore *had been* ~~were~~ meager or hardly known! Contrast the fact of Palestine and of the Jewish national renaissance in the life of world Jewry today with what it was before the World War. Recall, if you can, American Jewish life <sup>a</sup> generation ago - and contrast it with the magnitude, the complexity, the ferment and turbulence of it today!

And think with what desperate problems of survival - sheer political and economic survival - our present generation of Jews is being confronted in many parts of the world. There are powerful governments today ~~and not merely irresponsible and incited mobs~~ which are bent upon the *systematic* destruction or as they would have it - ~~the~~ elimination of their Jewish - not citizens any longer - but <sup>unwelcome</sup> ~~resident~~ aliens. They have <sup>a full-blown program of Antisemitism,</sup> ~~their~~ program.



<sup>an Anti-semitic</sup> metaphysics, <sup>an</sup> ~~their~~ apologetics, <sup>and an elaborate</sup> ~~and their~~ technique. <sup>And</sup> Nazism, be it remembered, is not confined to Germany, though in Germany it has had its freest play and its most <sup>shameful</sup> ~~complete~~ victories. It is a plague of lethal ideas, sweeping over the world, <sup>to-day</sup> victimizing the Jew wherever it reaches, comparable to the centuries - lasting madness which was let loose upon Europe by the Crusades, and equally as menacing to the peace and security of our people.

No government is quite secure today. No people is quite certain of its tomorrow. Nations have simply despaired of planning their future. They live as it were, from hand to mouth. Each day, is a day which brings them nearer to war or revolution. <sup>And</sup> In the midst of this universal insecurity and instability, the lot of our people is the most insecure of all. The times are desperately critical for all mankind - but most of all for that most sensitive seismograph of mankind's earthquakes and disturbances - Israel.

A <sup>therefore</sup> ~~young~~ <sup>all</sup> ~~rabbi~~ entering upon his career in such a time of tribulation will, <sup>mission</sup> ~~we~~ believe, best fulfil his ~~destiny~~ if he will set about to discover just what the predominant need of his age is, in the realm which he has made his own, and, <sup>such</sup> upon ~~his~~ findings, determine what the predominant occupation of his leadership shall be. What does the world stand most in need of ~~it~~ today? What does his <sup>stand in</sup> ~~people~~ <sup>most need</sup> today? How can he, with that power of heart and mind, with which he has been endowed, and with <sup>that</sup> ~~the~~ equipment of knowledge and insight which he <sup>has</sup> ~~secured~~ in this academy of learning, most directly, most relevantly, and most helpfully respond to those needs? What will be the burden of his message, <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ cry of his lips, the plea of his heart to his fellow men <sup>in these darkening days?</sup>

I regard the answers to these questions so paramount that I shall not dwell upon <sup>any of</sup> ~~the~~ other themes which a Baccalaureate address to a graduating class of rabbis normally is expected to dwell upon. [I will not moralize about



the qualities of character which are requisite for success in the ministry.

I do not know what success in the ministry means. One of the most successful men in the ministry that I know of, died of a broken heart. I will not admonish you to be strong and courageous. *in your advocacy of industrial justice and political integrity.* You are already too old to have that quality grafted on to you - if you do not already possess it. If one is at all morally sensitive - and if one is not, why, of all professions, should he choose the ministry - he will soon discover for himself that the bitterest moments in a man's life are those which find him desecrating with his own hands the beautiful altars of his own rearing and quenching the proud fires of his own spiritual stateliness. I might be tempted to direct your attention to a bit of wisdom which most of us acquire only after we have badly bruised ourselves and others - that there is such a thing as "speaking the truth in love." Occasionally, the hot, impatient word will leap to our lips. Occasionally our hand will reach for the scorpion whip at the sight of outrageous wrong. But we should bring ourselves to remember that in the spiritual order it is the law of kindness which yields the ultimate victory. Our task is to persuade through reason, and, through love, win men over to our vision. And if we fail - and most of one's ministry is failure - and the nobler the ministry, the greater the failures, and the more precious and exalted the rare victories - we shall at least not have sanctioned by <sup>our</sup> example the technique of hate, bitterness and *spiritual* violence which has gained such currency and approval ~~in the relationships~~ <sup>among</sup> men and nations today.

I might also be tempted to dwell upon the pastoral element in your ministry which in the eyes of many laymen in your future congregations will be regarded as ~~the~~ your most important service to them. You will be



admired for your eloquence, your scholarship and your achievements but you will be loved and blessed by grateful hearts for the helpful way in which you <sup>personally</sup> brought light to them <sup>directly</sup> in their dark hours, for what you meant to them *and theirs* ~~personally and directly~~ as friend, counsellor and guide.

These and other themes are tremendously <sup>important and</sup> deserving of comment on an occasion such as this. But uppermost in my mind today, are not these thoughts but the thought of the temper of the world into which you are entering as ministers ~~today~~, the desperate spiritual crisis in our civilization, the life-and-death struggle which is raging today between the classic religious and moral tradition of mankind as represented by Judaism and the new paganism of power, dictatorship, state totalitarianism, militarism, and racialism which is sweeping the world. I cannot help but be apprehensive concerning the quality of crisis and emergency which has entered <sup>life today</sup> the Jewish world. And I ask myself at this moment, watching the ordination of new rabbis in Israel, what shall a rabbi preach <sup>these</sup> in times? What shall be the ~~center~~ of gravity in his message and mission? Out of the treasure-trove of historic Jewish ideas, which shall he select to raise on high for ensign and banner to his <sup>troubled</sup> age?

The answer, it seems to me, is to be found in what I suggested a moment ago, in the timeless ideas of Judaism, in those truths which are from everlasting to everlasting. There are certain ideas or principles which are ~~indispensable~~ indispensable to any age regardless of its intellectual, political or economic complexion. Just as there are qualities of personal character ~~which~~ which were precious in the sight of man 5000 years ago, and which will hold their identical worth among men 10,000 years hence - integrity, courage, loyalty, self-restraint, - so there are values in the social life of the human



race as a whole which are eternally precious, paramount and permanent.

And these values - unfortunately ignored, spurned and denied by large sections of the world today, but which must nevertheless be defended and conserved at all cost if civilization is to endure - are, in the very truth, the *ערכי אנושיות* of Judaism; and, today, in their hour of betrayal, these ideals call for their spokesmen and champions as never before.

*Let me point to one or two of these essential and indispensable values.*  
A sovereign thought in Judaism is the supremacy of the moral law.

There is a Law - eternally valid, written by God in the hearts <sup>of men</sup> ~~and lives~~, binding alike upon all men, and all nations. No one is exempt from the operation of this law - this *אין אדם חסר חסד* - no state, no

class, no party, no government. Against that law, nations as well as individuals can and do sin - *אין אדם חסר חסד* "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity" - <sup>and</sup> ~~and~~ kings and ~~noblemen~~ and priests, and rich men, yes, and

the poor and the proletariat.... In the name of this supreme moral law, <sup>a prophet could denounce a king -</sup> ~~universally mandatory and exacting~~, a Samuel could <sup>attack</sup> ~~denounce~~ a Saul. Nathan could point the finger at King David and cry out *אין אדם חסר חסד* "Thou art

the man!" Elijah could summon Ahab to a dread accounting: *אין אדם חסר חסד*

and Jeremiah could pronounce down upon Zedekiah, because "he humbled not himself before Jeremiah speaking in the name of the Lord." But the fearful heresy of our day, <sup>proclaiming</sup> ~~proclaiming~~ not the supremacy of the moral law but the supremacy of the state or the nation. The state or nation can do no wrong.

The party in control of the state can do no wrong. The party boss, the Luce, the Fuehrer, the commissar, can do no wrong. The eternal cry of the Jew <sup>through the ages</sup> has been not - "There is no king but Caesar" but *אין אדם חסר חסד*

"There is no King but Thee!" The new paganism recognizes only one mortal sin for which a nation should do penance - the sin of <sup>having</sup> ~~being~~ defeated in battle.

<sup>and only one</sup> ~~"There is but~~ impartial judge above the nations," declared Col. <sup>as one of the</sup> ~~There~~, the



declared  
military expert of the Nazis, ~~and that is~~ - success! Since the Renaissance  
and the Reformation, since Machiavelli and Luther, the concept of state autonomy <sup>and self-suppression</sup>  
has fearfully advanced. Since Hegel and Fichte, the state has been apotheosized.  
The state is itself the right. It is the origin as well as the goal of all  
morality, and conformity with state ends is conformity with the moral law.  
State absolutism is steadily degrading morality to political strategy, and  
robbing man of his freedom and his dignity.

<sup>as in other fields</sup>  
There is here an irreconcilable antithesis between the classic  
<sup>the perspicacious among the new pagans know it. That is why</sup> Jewish tradition and the new paganism. Under our tradition the function of  
the state is to preserve law and order and to insure the largest measure of  
justice among men. Under the new dispensation, the function of the state is  
conquest through war. Its spirit is the "Wehrgeist". The goal of all  
education is "Wehrhaftigkeit." "Battle is the divine business of every  
German." ~~It is proclaimed, and~~ In Italy children are trained from infancy  
in the science of soldiering. "In pre-war days, in Europe", writes Franz  
Werfel, "soldiers marched because they had to; now boys of 12 march for the  
fun of it." In contrast to this mystic adoration of force, of "schrecklichkeit"  
and of brandishing <sup>of</sup> fists, ~~our~~ <sup>our</sup> tradition, proclaims <sup>נ צ ר ה /</sup>

The goal of our education is <sup>נ צ ר ה / נ א צ ו נ י א א צ ו</sup>

<sup>and healing</sup>  
Our tradition proclaims the redemptive/power of love. "Love thy  
neighbor." "Love the stranger." The new paganism proclaims the principle  
of hate, of class struggle, of irreconcilable national ambitions, of ~~of~~ xenophobia.

Our tradition speaks of humility, individual and collective.

<sup>נ צ ר ה / נ א צ ו נ י א א צ ו</sup>  
"The meek and humble shall inherit the earth." The new order is blatantly and  
vulgarily arrogant in its conceits, claims and pretenses. Dictators everywhere  
<sup>inflating</sup> are ~~pumping~~ <sup>with</sup> their peoples ~~full~~ <sup>and indoctrinating</sup> of the most boorish sort of national chauvenism,  
racial vanity and class <sup>intransigence</sup>.



Our tradition <sup>speaks</sup> ~~spoke~~ of the dignity of the individual. Our Torah begins with the creation of one man and ends with the death of one man. The first man was fashioned in the image of God. The second was one whom the Lord knew face to face. Man is significant in our tradition. <sup>עַל כֵּן נִקְרָא אִישׁ בְּשֵׁם אִשְׁתּוֹ</sup> Every individual has the right to say "for my sake was the world created." Every man is a unique event in the world. When one sees a great concourse of <sup>people</sup> ~~men~~, he should thank God for not having made them all of one mind. In the new emergent world, men are being driven back into herd mores, into dread <sup>conformity</sup> ~~conformity~~. They are being reconditioned into mass reactions. A fearful robotism is the clear objective of the modern totalitarian state.

Thus the very basic doctrines of our faith, the salient principles of our spiritual and moral tradition are being challenged in our day by ~~the~~ <sup>an</sup> ~~unclean~~ <sup>who are worshipping the unclean spirit - 1st Cor 13:1-17:23</sup> ~~spirit~~, by powerful, ruthless and determined forces. And these forces are scoring one victory after another. <sup>IP</sup> The rabbi, therefore, who is <sup>heir</sup> ~~heir~~ of prophet, priest, and psalmist, <sup>who</sup> ~~and~~ chooses to walk with them the <sup>עִלְיָא אֲבָרָא</sup> will in this hour of dread decision for mankind, preach, teach, proclaim most of all and above all these ancient truths with an earnestness and a vigor, with an eagerness and exaltation as if they were <sup>new</sup> revelations just come down to man, calculated to shake the very foundations of the world. <sup>IP</sup> There is an untamed and amazingly dogmatic romanticism abroad in the world today and this turgid, <sup>out</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the "messianic"</sup> ~~the~~ complex, out of headlong romanticism born ~~excess~~ excessive messianic expectations in the fields of politics and economics, has a tendency to make the classic ideals and standards of mankind seem old indeed, in fact, antiquated. <sup>That has happened before.</sup>

The nineteenth century believed that the laboratory would yield all truth. The twentieth century believed that the machine would achieve all good.



Both hopes have proved vain but ere life exposed their vanity, they had a way of making the old codes and convictions of historic religions look outworn and slightly ridiculous. But they were not outworn. They were not old. They were not young. They are eternal. And they are unsensational, quite as unsensational as a mathematical formula, quite like the mathematical formulae to which physicists are now attempting to reduce this whole complex and exciting universe of ours. To these unsensational and eternal truths of his religious culture, the rabbi should most fervently address himself today and proclaim them with renewed emphasis to the world. ]

And to his own people, the rabbi would do well to bring today a message of comfort and confidence. There is a time to chide and a time to soothe. The harrassed soul of Israel today needs the healing, comforting word. It needs morale. It needs the reassurance of a resplendent destiny, of ultimate victory, of the sheltering wings of God. In the hour of Israel's prosperity and power, our ancient prophets castigated their people but in its dark hour of sorrow, defeat and exile, they spoke with a compassionate tenderness. They spoke of resurrection, of vindication, of restoration. Their banner over their people was Love ----- The Synagogue should, in these days, be a place of spiritual refuge and heartening. From the pulpit should come to our people not querulousness and censoriousness and partisanship and spluttering polemics and the bitterness of an impatient or disappointed spirit -- "We walk no better for abusing our crutches" -- but the strong, confident faith, the gladdening word of hope and the wise, practical guidance and instruction. In such times as these, I suspect



that our people stand in greater need of sages than of prophets.

The rabbi today should quietly and patiently strengthen the strongholds of Jewish life and the bulwarks of Jewish revival ----- the Synagogue, the School and all other vital communal agencies. We do not need today a new philosophy of Jewish life, *it is not Judaism which needs reconstruction to-day but ourselves.* a new set of concepts and definitions to play around with. <sup>^</sup>Of course, we are in an age of transition. We always have been. The gloomy Dean Inge opines that when Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, Adam turned to Eve and said:- "My dear, we are now entering <sup>upon</sup> an age of transition". Of course we must make adjustments to changed conditions. But Jewish survival owes far more to our people's refusal to make hasty and temporary adjustments, to an obdurate insistence on the eternity and unchangeability of the basic teachings of Judaism ----- *אבותינו לא ידעו שיהיה לנו עתיד אחר* than to any facile and accommodating adjustability. We need today planned and intensive cultivation of the marvelous spiritual and cultural legacy which is ours, energetic dissemination of our eternal teachings, training, up-building and organization.

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A great hour awaits you, my friends, and you will be matched with this hour - It is a time *עוֹלָם אֵלֶּיךָ* when Kings go forth to battle and mighty armies close in desperate combat. But you are to be rabbis, leaders of a people whose very name - Israel - means wrestling with angels and demons and mastering them. You are to be the teachers of the Torah and of such it was said long ago *וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַח אִשְׂרָאֵל בְּרֵאשִׁית וְיִשְׂמַח בְּאַחֶיךָ* "whoever devoted himself to the Torah, he shall triumph in the end".



36-16

GRADUATION EXERCISES

HEBREW UNION  
COLLEGE




CLASS OF 1936

SIDNEY M. BERKOWITZ, B.A.  
ADOLPH J. FEINBERG, B. A.  
ERIC FRIEDLAND, B.A.  
ROLAND B. GITTELSON, B.A.  
SAMUEL GLASNER, B.A.  
BERTRAM KLAUSNER, B.A.  
BURTON E. LEVINSON, B.A.  
GEORGE B. LIEBERMAN, B.A.  
MAURICE LYONS, B.A.  
JACOB M. ROTHSCHILD, B.A.  
EUGENE JULIUS SACK, B.A.  
ABRAHAM DAVID SHAW, B.A.  
MYRON SILVERMAN, B.A.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON, MAY TWENTY-THIRD

NINETEEN HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SIX

*At half past two o'clock*





# Program



ORGAN PRELUDE

SULZER

RUTH S. GREENFIELD

HORIU

GOLDSTEIN

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE CHOIR

INVOCATION

RABBI JEROME D. FOLKMAN (1931)

*Jackson, Mich.*

ZOCHARTI LOCH

STRING QUARTETTE

AND

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE CHOIR  
(String Arrangement by Ruth S. Greenfield)

LEWANDOWSKI

BACCALAUREATE SERMON

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER, D.D., RIT.D. (1915)

*Cleveland, Ohio*

SH'MA

GOLDSTEIN

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE CHOIR



ORDINATION OF RABBIS

REV. DR. JULIAN MORGENSTERN  
*President, Hebrew Union College*

VIOLIN OBLIGATO

PHILIP D. DREIFUS

CONFERRING OF GRADUATE DEGREES

DECLARATION

DR. ALBERT H. FREIBERG  
*Board of Governors  
Hebrew Union College*

MR. ROBERT P. GOLDMAN  
*Executive Board  
Union of American Hebrew Congregations*

HALLELUJAH

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE CHOIR

LEWANDOWSKI

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AWARDS OF PRIZES

WHEN THIS SONG OF PRAISE SHALL CEASE

STARK

CHOIR AND CONGREGATION

BENEDICTION

RABBI JAMES G. HELLER, M.U.D. (1916)  
*Cincinnati, Ohio*



## When This Song of Praise Shall Cease

When this song of praise shall cease,  
Let Thy children, Lord, depart  
With the blessing of Thy peace,  
And Thy love in ev'ry heart,  
And Thy love in ev'ry heart.

Oh, where'er our path may lie,  
Father, let us not forget  
That we walk beneath Thine eye,  
That Thy care upholds us yet,  
That Thy care upholds us yet.



### HEBREW UNION COLLEGE CHOIR

RUTH S. GREENFIELD - - - - - DIRECTOR AND ORGANIST

#### FIRST TENORS

BENJAMIN E. DERÖY, JR.  
JACOB POLISH  
HERMANN SCHAALMANN  
LOUIS M. YOUNGERMAN

#### SECOND TENORS

MORTON A. BAUMAN  
MALCOLM H. STERN  
ALFRED WOLF

#### BARITONES

WOLFGANG KAELETER  
BERNARD D. ROSENBERG  
LOU SELBERMAN, JR.  
LESTER STEIN

#### BASSES

RICHARD C. HERTZ  
DAVID D. SHOR  
HERSCHEL LYMON

#### STRING QUARTETTE

BERNARD LAVINE	ALEX FINESILVER
DUDLEY WEINBERG	WOLFGANG KAELETER



# THE CLASS OF 1936

THE FACULTY

AND THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF

## THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE

INVITE YOU TO ATTEND THE

GRADUATION EXERCISES

AND THE CONFERRING OF THE DEGREE OF RABBI

SATURDAY, MAY THE TWENTY-THIRD

AT HALF AFTER TWO O'CLOCK

IN THE COLLEGE CHAPEL

CINCINNATI, OHIO

*Bacc. - AHS*



THE ANCIENT PATHS  
BACCALAUREATE ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY  
DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER  
CLEVELAND, OHIO

At the Graduation Exercises of  
THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE  
CINCINNATI, OHIO  
Saturday, May 23, 1936

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## THE ANCIENT PATHS

DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER

Virgil concludes the fourth book of his *Georgics* with an epilogue in which he says: "Thus I sang of the care of fields, of cattle and of trees, while great Caesar thundered in war by deep Euphrates, and gave a victor's law unto willing nations and essayed the path to Olympus." While vast political events were sweeping by him, and mighty changes, affecting men and nations, were taking place all around him, the poet was content to sing of the tillage, of planting, of the rearing of cattle and the keeping of bees. This was due not so much to his love of "inglorious ease"—as he himself modestly suggests—but, we suspect, to his intuitive surmise that here, in nature,—in fields, trees and cattle, in the revolving seasons, in the eternal life-hunger of living things, in death and resurrection—were the abiding realities of life, the facts which endure though all else changes, the things which survive the rise and fall of empires and mighty Caesars thundering by deep Euphrates.

Virgil's judgment seems sound. It is good for all men, and especially for leaders of men, in periods of ferment and upheaval, to keep steadily before their eyes and before the eyes of other men not so much the things which are timely as the things which are timeless.

One of the great gifts which an historic religion like ours brings to mankind is that it carries in its deep channels, steadily, safely and undeviatingly, certain timeless, quintessential truths, regardless of the roiling and foaming of the waters on the surface which may



be lashed by the sudden gusts of winds or storms. The teachers of our religion whether prophet, priest or rabbi, spoke of the **חידות מני קדם אשר שמענו** "the ancient paths," the **נתיבות עולם** "the dark sayings of old—that which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us"—the **ראשונות מעולם**—"the former things of old," not because they were slaves of tradition, but because they surmised that in them was a pattern of life and ideas not hastily or carelessly sketched by a passing day or a transient mood, but fashioned out of a vast millennial experience, a long and profound searching, one which had stood well the wear and test of time, and one which had been found by unnumbered generations to be the "good way," the way which gives rest to the tried souls of men and nations.

Our days are swept by revolution. Our world is not only restless with change, but the changes are sudden, swift and seemingly devoid of any informing principle, or definite goal. It is not at all clear whether these changes are prophecy of a new political and social cosmos or only the throes of a painful disintegration into chaos. Men and nations seem unable to find any strong, simple moral certainties to which to render their eager loyalties and upon which to build a positive and tranquil life. The air is filled with the din of many confused and confusing voices shouting their strident, violent messages. Everywhere there is great thundering by deep Euphrates. . . .

At such times, the rabbi who wishes to serve men in their deepest needs will do well to stand fast by the classic traditions of his faith. I mean, the things which are unchangeable and perdurable in it, the values which are from everlasting to everlasting.

**דור דור ודורשי**. Each age must have a spiritual leadership whose predominant occupation is responsive to its predominant need. At all times it is in the realm of *emphases* where the genius of true leadership lies. The role of the rabbi, broadly speaking, remains fairly constant through the ages and that role is fairly well defined. He is the expounder of the theology and ethics of Judaism, the interpreter of its law, and the spiritual guide of his people's communal life and institutions.

But each age has its own crisis and urgency. Each generation



has its own particular set of perplexities. This is particularly true of Jewish life. How frequent and sudden and radical are the changes which come over Jewish life in the diaspora. Between 1914 and 1934 alone—in 20 short years—the life and fortunes of more than half of the Jews of the world have been altered in such an amazing and drastic manner as to set at naught all former calculation and prognosis. Think of the transformations, political, economic and cultural, which have come over the lives of the three million Jews of Russia in the last two decades, and of the half million Jews of Germany, and to a lesser degree, of the millions of Jews in the other countries of Central and Eastern Europe! Think of the new diaspora which is fast being created today in countries and continents where Jewish settlements heretofore had been meager or hardly known! Contrast the fact of Palestine and of the Jewish national renaissance in the life of world Jewry today with what it was before the World War. Recall, if you can, American Jewish life of a generation ago—and contrast it with the magnitude, the complexity, the ferment and turbulence of it today!

And think with what desperate problems of survival—sheer political and economic survival—our present generation of Jews is being confronted in many parts of the world. There are powerful governments today which are bent upon the systematic destruction or as they would have it—elimination of their Jewish—not citizens any longer—but unwelcome aliens. They have a full-blown program of anti-Semitism, an anti-Semitic metaphysics, an apologetics and an elaborate technique. And Nazism, be it remembered, is not confined to Germany, though in Germany it has had its freest play and its most shameful victories. It is a plague of lethal ideas, sweeping over the world today, victimizing the Jew wherever it reaches, comparable to the centuries-lasting madness which was let loose upon Europe by the Crusades, and equally as menacing to the peace and security of our people.

No government is quite secure today. No people is quite certain of its tomorrow. Nations have simply despaired of planning their future. They live, as it were, from hand to mouth. Each day is a day which brings them nearer to war or revolution. And in the midst of this universal insecurity and instability, the lot of our



people is the most insecure of all. The times are desperately critical for all mankind—but most of all for that most sensitive seismograph of all mankind's earthquakes and disturbances—Israel.

A rabbi, therefore, entering upon his career in such a time of tribulation will, I believe, best fulfil his mission if he will set about to discover just what the predominant need of his age is, in the realm which he has made his own, and, upon such findings, determine what the predominant occupation of his leadership shall be. What does the world stand most in need of today? What does his people stand most in need of today? How can he, with that power of heart and mind, with which he has been endowed, and with that equipment of knowledge and insight which he has secured in this academy of learning, most directly, most relevantly, and most helpfully respond to those needs? What will be the burden of his message, the cry of his lips, the plea of his heart to his fellow men in these darkening days?

I regard the answers to these questions so paramount that I shall not dwell upon any of the other themes which a Baccalaureate address to a graduating class of rabbis normally is expected to dwell upon. I will not moralize about the qualities of character which are requisite for success in the ministry. I do not know what success in the ministry means. One of the most successful men in the ministry that I know of died of a broken heart. I will not admonish you to be strong and courageous in your advocacy of industrial justice and political integrity. You are already too old to have that quality grafted on to you if you do not already possess it. If one is at all morally sensitive—and if one is not, why, of all professions, should he choose the ministry—he will soon discover for himself that the bitterest moments in a man's life are those which find him desecrating with his own hands the beautiful altars of his own moral integrity and quenching the proud fires of his own spiritual stateliness. I might be tempted to direct your attention to a bit of wisdom which most of us acquire only after we have badly bruised ourselves and others—that there is such a thing as “speaking the truth in *love*.” Occasionally, the hot, impatient word will leap to our lips. Occasionally our hand will reach for the scorpion whip at the sight of outrageous wrong. But we should



bring ourselves to remember that in the spiritual order it is the law of kindness which yields the ultimate victory. Our task is to persuade through reason, and, through love, win men over to our vision. And if we fail—and most of one's ministry is failure—and the nobler the ministry, the greater the failures, and the more precious and exalted the rare victories—we shall at least not have sanctioned by our example the technique of hate, bitterness and spiritual violence which has gained such currency and approval among men and nations today.

I might also be tempted to dwell upon the pastoral element in your ministry which in the eyes of many laymen in your future congregations will be regarded as your most important service to them. You will be admired for your eloquence, your scholarship and your achievements but you will be loved and blessed by grateful hearts for the helpful way in which you personally will bring light to them directly in their dark hours, for what you personally will mean to them and theirs as friend, counsellor and guide.

These and other themes are tremendously important and deserving of comment on an occasion such as this. But uppermost in my mind today, are not these thoughts but the thoughts of the temper of the world into which you are entering as ministers, the desperate spiritual crisis in our civilization, the life-and-death struggle which is raging today between the classic religious and moral tradition of mankind as represented by Judaism and the new paganism of power, dictatorship, state totalitarianism, militarism, and racialism which is sweeping the world. I cannot help but be apprehensive also concerning the quality of crisis and emergency which has entered Jewish life today. And I ask myself at this moment, watching the ordination of new rabbis in Israel, what shall a rabbi preach in these times? What shall be the center of gravity in his message and mission? Out of the treasure-trove of historic Jewish ideas, which shall he select to raise on high for ensign and banner to his troubled age?

The answer, it seems to me, is to be found in what I suggested a moment ago, in the *timeless* ideas of Judaism, in those truths which are from everlasting to everlasting. There are certain ideas or principles which are indispensable to any age regardless of its in-



tellectual, political or economic complexion. Just as there are qualities of personal character which were precious in the sight of man five thousand years ago, and which will hold their identical worth among men ten thousand years hence—integrity, courage, loyalty, self-restraint,—so there are values in the social life of the human race as a whole which are eternally precious, paramount and permanent.

And these values—unfortunately ignored, spurned and denied by large sections of the world today, but which must nevertheless be defended and conserved at all cost if civilization is to endure—are, in very truth, the **נתיבות עולם** of Judaism; and, today, in their hour of betrayal, these ideals call for their spokesmen and champions as never before.

Let me point to one or two of these essential and indispensable values. A sovereign thought in Judaism has been the supremacy of the moral law. There is a law—eternally valid, written by God in the hearts of men, binding alike upon all men, and all nations. No one is exempt from the operation of this law—this **תורה אחת ומשפט אחד**—no state, no class, no party, no government. Against that law, nations as well as individuals can and do sin—**הוי גוי חטא**—“Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity”—and kings and noblemen and priests, and rich men, yes, and the poor and the proletariat. . . . In the name of this supreme moral law, universally mandatory and exacting, a prophet could denounce a king—**ואדברה בעידתך נגד מלכים ולא אבוש**. A Samuel could attack a Saul. Nathan could point the finger at King David and cry out **אתה האיש** “Thou art the man!” Elijah could summon Ahab to a dread accounting: **הרצחת ונם ירשת** and Jeremiah could pronounce down upon Zedekiah, because “he humbled not himself before Jeremiah speaking in the name of the Lord.”

But the fearful heresy of our day proclaims not the supremacy of the moral law but the supremacy of the state or the nation. The state or nation can do no wrong. The party in control of the state can do no wrong. The party boss, the Duce, the Fuehrer, the commissar, can do no wrong. The eternal cry of the Jew through the ages has been not “There is no king but Caesar” but **אין לנו מלך אלא אתה** “There is no King but Thee!” The new



paganism recognizes only one mortal sin for which a nation should do penance—the sin of having been defeated in battle and only one impartial judge above the nations, as one of the military expert of the Nazis declared,—*success!* Since the Renaissance and the Reformation, since Machiavelli and Luther, the concept of state autonomy and self-sufficiency has fearfully advanced. Since Hegel and Fichte, the state has been apotheosized. The state is itself the right. It is the origin as well as the goal of all morality, and conformity with state ends is conformity with the moral law. State absolutism is steadily degrading morality to political strategy, and robbing man of his freedom and his dignity.

There is here, as in other fields, an irreconcilable antithesis between the classic Jewish tradition and the new paganism. The perspicacious among the new pagans know it. That is why the Nazis, for example, have centered their bitterest attacks upon the Jew and Judaism, and upon the Old Testament.

Under our tradition the function of the state is to preserve law and order and to insure the largest measure of justice among men. Under the new dispensation, the function of the state is conquest through war. Its spirit is the "Wehrgeist." The goal of all education is "Wehrhaftigkeit." "Battle is the divine business of every German." In Italy children are trained from infancy in the science of soldiering. "In pre-war days, in Europe," writes Franz Werfel, "soldiers marched because they had to; now boys of twelve march for the fun of it." In contrast to this mystic adoration of force, of "schrecklichkeit" and of brandishing of fists, our tradition proclaims **לא בכח**. The goal of our education is **וכתתו חרבותם לאתים**.

Our tradition proclaims the redemptive and healing power of love. "Love thy neighbor." "Love the stranger." The new paganism proclaims the principle of hate, of class struggle, of irreconcilable national ambitions, of xenophobia.

Our tradition speaks of humility, individual and collective. "The humble shall inherit the earth." **הוי שפל רוח**. The new order is blatantly and vulgarly arrogant in its conceits, claims and pretensions. Dictators everywhere are inflating their peoples with the most boorish and indecent sort of national chauvinism, racial vanity and class intransigence.



Our tradition speaks of the dignity of the individual. Our Torah begins with the creation of *one* man and ends with the death of *one* man. The first man was fashioned in the image of God. The second was one whom the Lord knew face to face. Man is significant in our tradition. **אני אמרתי אלהים אחם ובני עליון כלכם**. Every individual has the right to say "for my sake was the world created." Every man is a unique event in the world. When one sees a great concourse of people, he should thank God for not having made them all of one mind. In the new emergent world, men are being driven back into herd mores, into dread conformity. They are being re-conditioned into mass reactions. A fearful robotism is the clear objective of the modern totalitarian state.

Thus the very basic doctrines of our faith, the salient principles of our spiritual and moral tradition are being challenged in our day by powerful, ruthless and determined forces who are again worshipping the unclean spirit **זיבחו לשדים לא אלה**. And these forces are scoring one victory after another.

The rabbi, therefore, who is heir of prophet, priest, and psalmist, who chooses to walk with them the **נתיבות עולם** will in this hour of dread decision for mankind, preach, teach, and proclaim most of all and above all these ancient truths with an earnestness and a vigor, with an eagerness and exaltation as if they were new revelations just come down to man, calculated to shake the very foundations of the world.

There is an untamed and amazingly dogmatic romanticism abroad in the world today and this turgid, headlong romanticism born out of the "maranatha" complex, out of excessive messianic expectations in the fields of politics and economics, has a tendency to make the classic ideals and standards of mankind seem old indeed, in fact, antiquated. That has happened before. The nineteenth century believed that the laboratory would yield all truth. The twentieth century believed that the machine would achieve all good. Both hopes have proved vain but ere life exposed their vanity, they had a way of making the old codes and convictions of historic religions look outworn and slightly ridiculous. But they were not outworn. They were not old. They were not young. They are eternal. And they are unsensational, quite as unsensational as a mathematical



formula, quite like the mathematical formulae to which physicists are now attempting to reduce this whole complex and exciting universe of ours. To these unsensational and eternal truths of his religious culture, the rabbi should most fervently address himself today and proclaim them with renewed emphasis to the world.

And to his own people, the rabbi would do well to bring today a message of comfort and confidence. There is a time to chide and a time to soothe. The harassed soul of Israel today needs the healing, comforting word. It needs morale. It needs the reassurance of a resplendent destiny, of ultimate victory, of the sheltering wings of God. In the hour of Israel's prosperity and power, our ancient prophets castigated their people but in its dark hour of sorrow, defeat and exile, they spoke with a compassionate tenderness. They spoke of resurrection, of vindication, of restoration. Their banner over their people was Love. The Synagog should, in these days, be a place of spiritual refuge and heartening. From the pulpit should come to our people not querulousness and censoriousness and partisanship and spluttering polemics and the bitterness of an impatient or disappointed spirit—"we walk no better for abusing our crutches"—but the strong, confident faith, the gladdening word of hope and the wise, practical guidance and instruction. In such times as these, I suspect that our people stands in greater need of sages than of prophets.

The rabbi today should quietly and patiently strengthen the strongholds of Jewish life and the bulwarks of Jewish survival agencies. We do not need today a new philosophy of Jewish life, a new set of concepts and definitions to play around with. It is not Judaism which needs reconstruction today but ourselves. Of course, we are in an age of transition. We always have been. The gloomy Dean Inge opines that when Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, Adam turned to Eve and said:—"My dear, we are now definitely entering upon an age of transition. . . ." Of course we must make adjustments to changed conditions. But Jewish survival owes far more to our people's *refusal* to make hasty and temporary adjustments, to an obdurate insistence upon the eternity and unchangeability of the basic teachings of Judaism—שואת התורה לא—than to any facile and accommodating adjustability. תהא מחלפת



We need today planned and intensive cultivation of the marvelous spiritual and cultural legacy which is ours, energetic dissemination of our eternal teachings. We need training, up-building and organization.

The rabbi today should strive not for unity in Israel—a task quite impossible of achievement among our people or among any other people—but for a maximum measure of cooperation on the basis of common needs and obligations. He should foster among his people the larger loyalty to the whole House of Israel—here and abroad—and the sense of a common destiny. Provincialism and protective isolationism are no longer possible for any Jewish community in the world today. The rabbi should encourage the cooperation of his people in the up-building of the Jewish Homeland in Palestine—not because that is *the* solution of the Jewish problem—there is no one solution—for there is no one Jewish problem—nor because he is enamoured of nationalism, which has more or less run riot in the modern world—nor yet because he feels that the Galut is liquidating and that there is no longer any hope for Jewish communities in the Diaspora—that is a too-hasty reading both of past and of contemporaneous Jewish history as well as of the history of mankind, but because a Jewish Homeland will help to normalize the status of our people in the world, because it will remove the element of desperation—of fighting with our backs to the wall—from our renewed struggle for equality and emancipation, which the world has again forced upon us, because it will serve as a haven for hosts of our people who must now seek new homes in a world where doors are everywhere closing, and because this Jewish Homeland may become in the days to come a vast dynamo of creative Jewish cultural and spiritual energies.

A great hour awaits you, my friends, and you will be matched with this hour. It is a time of **צאת המלכים** when Kings go forth to battle and mighty armies close in desperate combat. But you are to be rabbis, leaders of a people whose very name—Israel—means wrestling with angels and demons and mastering them. You are to be the teachers of the Torah, and of such it was said long ago: **כל מי שעוסק בתלמוד תורה הרי זה מתעלה** “whoever devotes himself to the Torah, he shall triumph in the end.”