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National Day of Prayer, 1940.

RADIO ADDRESS BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER OVER N.B.C. NETWORKS
ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, SEPTEMBER 8, 1940 - "NATIONAL DAY OF
PRAYER" PROGRAM.

A great president of our country once declared, " If I must choose between righteousness and peace, I choose righteousness." That, we may all agree, is sound spiritual doctrine. Our age is again confronted with this dread choice, because the nations of the earth have sought neither peace nor righteousness. Our world is at war again because the world's leaders have lacked both the vision and the courage to build an enduring peace upon the strong foundations of justice. Because peoples were not willing to offer the sacrifices of peace, they must now offer the bloody and unavailing sacrifices of war.

What had been fashioned in such high hopes at the close of the last war, out of the agony and martyrdom of millions of men -- a league of free peoples pledged to renounce war forever, and to regulate all conflicts by law and not by force, was wrecked and scuttled. The architects of the new international order either abandoned or betrayed it. And now the old order has returned, a hundred-fold more brutal and shameless. New despots have arisen, and with new slogans and battle-cries, and with far deadlier weapons, they are on the imperial march again, bringing death and sorrow to a world scarcely recovered from the frightful ravages of the last war.

For many years now mankind has been on a disastrous spiritual retreat, which has finally brought it to the edge of a wilderness. Never has life been so filled with unrelieved tension and with thoughts of doom. Never has the moral climate of an age sunk so low. All streams of human thought have been roiled and polluted by governments which have caused their people to drink of the cup of staggering and of spiritual confusion. Men have been cowered, and impenetrable walls of hate and lies have been built around their slave-pens.

Nothing can save our world but thoroughgoing repentance - repentance which must be the preliminary to any recovery of its lost spiritual harmonies. We have

lost our way. Our guides have proved faithless or blind. We find ourselves in a great Serbonian bog. Our tortured age now cries for a new leadership, a new vision and a new consecration.

To be sure, the tyrants who have arisen - whom we permitted to arise - and who are now bent upon conquest and the total defeat of the free spirit of man, must be destroyed, if peace is ever to have a chance in the world. But we should not delude ourselves a second time. Their destruction alone will not achieve permanent peace. Peace is never won through war or preparation for war, but through peace and preparation for peace. Peace is possible only when nations are prepared to curb their appetites, to surrender their false notions of sovereignty and prestige, to share the ample resources of the good earth, and to live and let live. Peace demands rigorous education in the spiritual disciplines of cooperative international living, and of broad human fellowship. Peace is far more difficult than war. But tragically enough, it is on war and the things of war that we are now compelled to lavish all our material and intellectual resources and are about to conscript our youth.

As a nation we must, of course, be strong and armed in this war-mad world to defend ourselves and our cherished way of life. But has it not been demonstrated over and over again, in recent months, that no nation is secure on neutrality or isolation, or behind ramparts of steel and fire however formidable? It is for us rather to forge the greater strength and the larger vision, for the time to come, when we shall be summoned not alone to help clear away the ruins of a war-shattered world, but also to assume our full share of responsibility for making another attempt to build a juster and kinder world, a world wherein men may live unmolested lives in decency, quietness and freedom.

Without a spiritual regeneration, without humble repentance and contrition, without a determination to dare for peace, and to suffer and sacrifice for it, we

can have neither certitude nor peace nor freedom, and men and nations will sink ever deeper into the darkness which is engulfing them.

May the God of all nations look upon the sorrows of this generation of men, upon their slain sons, their ruined cities, their homeless refugees, and the terror and hopelessness of their lives, as atonement for their sins, and may He, in His Grace, grant us another chance to build His Kingdom and our happiness upon this earth. May He spread the mantle of His peace over our tired hearts.

