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Judaism and the new world order, 1941.

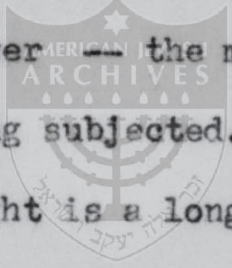


## JUDAISM AND THE NEW WORLD ORDER

By

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I hope you will not think this afternoon that I come to you in the role of a prophet. I am much afraid of that role.

I come to you this afternoon as a seeker. What kind of a peace do we religious people want to follow this war? What kind of a world do we want to see come into being. As the world drags on and as the war drags on taking a heavier and heavier toll and the number of sacrifices increases, the people in the warring nations are asking themselves more and more, "What are we fighting for?" These peoples, living in the remaining free countries, must have a satisfactory answer. Their morale depends upon the answer  the morale to sustain them under the terrific pounding to which they are being subjected. When you fight your way out of a death-infested jungle, and the fight is a long and desperate one, the only thing that can sustain you is the thought that someday you will fight your way out into the clear again. If you thought that just another jungle lay ahead, your spirit would be broken. And so people are asking themselves today, "Is this bloody war to end in another brief armistice to be followed again in fifteen or twenty years by another world war?" "Is victory going to bring us the old order again, the old special privileges, the old iniquities? Is it going to restore to us the world as it was in the last two decades or as it was in the decades preceding the first world war?" "Will a victory for Hitler and Mussolini be enough?" Was a victory over the Kaiser quite enough?

Here in America we are asking ourselves the same question from another angle. Is America going to pour out its resources, is it going to convert itself into an arsenal to help England crush Hitlerism and then leave the world ripe and ready for some other Hitler five, ten, or twenty years from now? What are we helping in this fight for? Was not France defeated because its people



did not know what they were fighting for? Basically, was <sup>not</sup> that the reason? One month they were told that they must appease the dictator and the next month they were told that they must fight him. Were not the English people almost destroyed by the same moral and intellectual confusion? What kind of peace do we want?

Well, we know what kind of a peace Hitler wants. He wants a peace of conquest, a peace of domination, a peace of subjugation, a peace which in one form or another would enslave the rest of the world to serve the interest of the elite of the Germanic race. I am not now interpreting his peace. I am quoting him. A Hitler victory, a Fascist victory will give us a world which would be scientifically coordinated, regimented, economically rationalized for the sole purpose of serving the one master race. The conquered peoples will be told how to live, what to produce, what to export, and what to import, what wages to pay their workers, what standard of living to maintain, the kind of education that they shall give and to whom that education shall be given, and the kind of ideas that will be tolerated. Small nations will cease to exist and the larger conquered nations will be tolerated only as economic and political satrapies. The rights of man would cease to exist as they already have ceased to exist in that part of the world which is already under the heel of the Nazis or Fascists.

And mankind will move swiftly into another dark age, more dark and much more murderous than the Dark Ages of history because there will no longer be any religion, any Judaeo-Christian tradition to attenuate the brutalities of the new Dark Ages. It will be a peace, of course. It will be the peace of the prison house, the peace of slavery. If Hitler wins in the next sixty or ninety days, as he might, that is the kind of world we will have. Europe will have it first and we here will have to fight a life and death struggle to keep it from our shores. That kind of a world has already been established in Poland and Czechoslovakia and in the other lands which have already been conquered. And that kind of a world will endure for a long time. It will not be overthrown except by some kind of a revolution and with



the perfected systems of espionage and control, revolution is very difficult to-day.

Now surely this is not the kind of a peace that the allies want. We are fighting to destroy the threat of such a peace. We are helping a brave people, two brave peoples, to fight for a free world and a free peace -- a peace for free peoples in which even the peoples of Germany and Italy will be free and at peace. Therefore, the peace that we want must not be a peace of vengeance, a peace of indemnities and exactions. It must not be constructed with an eye to keeping the defeated countries in perpetual bondage or vassalage. It must not be constructed on the hope of disrupting the political unity or of partitioning the countries which will lose in this war or of keeping them permanently disarmed in an armed world. This was tried after 1918 and it failed. The peace that we are hoping for is the kind of a peace which will enable the peoples of Germany and Italy to throw off the yoke of their dictatorships and never again experience the need for subjecting themselves to another dictatorship in order to obtain justice. We want a just peace -- but here is the rub! No peace following a war in which hates are aroused, cruelties committed, and passions excited, can be completely a just peace. You have to be realistic. The longer a war lasts, the more passions and hates are aroused, the less likelihood that the peace terms following such a war will be entirely just. Therefore, provision must be made, as was not made following the last world war, in the peace treaties for periodic revision and rectifications of the terms of the final settlement. No aggrieved people should ever feel that it can obtain redress only through another war.

What was wrong with the Versailles treaty was not that it was altogether bad and near-sighted. That wasn't so at all. In many ways it was a great document, containing a great deal of statesmanship and good political thinking. Most of the provisions of the Versailles treaty and the other ~~ixix~~ treaties were fair and just. Certainly the provisions for the self-determination of peoples, for a League of Nations, for the protection of the rights of minorities were important



steps forward in the evolution of a just international order. But the war-weary men who framed it left no room, no provision, no machinery for the periodic restudy and revision of those treaties.

The peace we want, we religious folk who believe in God and who believe in man -- is the peace that will bring into existence an organized society, be it a Federal Union, a Federation of Europe, a Federation of Western Europe, Regional, political and economic unions within a larger Federation, but certainly an organization for the perpetuation of peace and for the adjudication of international differences that may arise in the future. And if war is not to be a recurrent phenomenon and peace just a brief armistice between wars, then the creation of such an organization must be regarded as inevitable.

The League idea is sound! The League of Nations which was built after the world war might have been too ambitious, might have relied too much on what we call the force of public opinion and not enough on the mechanics of an international force, and might have been too doctrinaire as concerning the principle of national sovereignty. It may have made it too easy to secede from the League of Nations, which secession spelt the ruin of the League. But the idea of a League of Nations, as an organization for mutual protection against attack from any corner is sound and inevitable. The fact that it hasn't worked the first time is no reflexion upon the soundness of the idea. No great idea comes into full flowering and succeeds completely the first time.

The coming peace must also establish again the principles of self-determination of peoples. That, of course is clear, but it does not go far enough. Political self-determination was given the fullest opportunity under the terms of the Versailles treaty, and it proved inadequate because political self-determination does not imply economic self-determination. And because it does not carry with it economic self-determination, the small nations which sought to preserve their sovereignty resorted to the fantastic method of making themselves economically self-sufficient and self-determinate. That was clearly



an impossibility. The treaties for the new world order must make possible the creation of larger economic orbits wherein the smaller nations of Europe can cooperate economically, in order to enable them to survive politically.

Imagine what would happen if the forty-eight states of our union were each trying to become economically self sufficient and independent of each other -- would erect tariff walls and would plan its economic life with an eye to war and military invulnerability. The channels of the trade of the world must be cleared of all political obstructions for the economic life of Europe to revive, and for the smaller political units to survive.

Those who framed the Versailles Treaties were too politically minded and not enough economically minded.

There must also be an end to imperialism. Empires must be reconstructed into commonwealths of free peoples within the larger framework of a world organization, just as the British Empire largely reconstructed itself in recent years. India must be given the right of a free commonwealth if it is to remain within the British Empire. Colonies must be helped to develop into independent states, and until such time they should be internationally administered for the benefit of the indigenous populations and not primarily for the benefit of European nations. Access to their raw material should be open and free to all on equal terms. That will obviate the necessity for rivalry in the political control of these colonies.

One of the most difficult problems in the world, and one which led to the last war is the problem of minorities -- racial, religious, national. These minorities were exploited as "pawns" in the hands of empires. Empires played one minority against another. Hitler is now trying to solve this minority problem drastically through the device of enforced transference of populations. He has taken German minorities out of the Baltic states and transplanted them back into Germany. He has taken Polish minorities living in western Poland and forced them to move to other parts of Poland. This attempt to solve the minority



problem through enforced migration is, in my judgment, doomed to failure. History has it. The way to solve the minority scrambled the populations of Europe too much for statesmanship to succeed in unscrambling/ problem was indicated in the treaties following the last war -- to grant them cultural group autonomy and to guarantee the individual members of such groups the same political rights and privileges which are enjoyed by the members of the majority groups. The Soviet Union recognized that principle in all of its one hundred fifty and more nationality groups and it has had no trouble with that problem at any time.

A just peace will require the granting of minority rights to all these minority peoples of Europe and to the Jewish group as well, for the Jewish group in Eastern and Central Europe represents a minority, which has more than any other been exploited for political ends.

It has been argued that there can be no lasting peace, no limitation of national sovereignty, no world free from Fascist menace and no permanent world order unless capitalistic power and privilege is first limited in each country and the fundamental redistribution of economic power first takes place. For, it is argued, it is the power of special privilege, when it is threatened by democratic demands, which in one country after another, has helped to destroy democracy. It is the vested interests which require sovereignty for their protection. It is they who so frequently start war. Economic power must therefore first come into the hands of the people through the socialization of industry, before a permanent peace can be hoped for in the world. Well, this may be so. I am not at all convinced that it is so, after seeing what the Soviet Union has done in the last two years in Finland, Poland and in other parts of Eastern Europe. It does not inspire the conviction that a socialized state is automatically above imperialistic interests and acts of aggression.

The process toward socialization is a slow one and it can very well advance side by side with an accelerated movement towards the establishment of an international order, towards collective security, free flow of trade and the securing of minority rights. It is not wise to postpone the solution of the one



pending the solution of the other.

The last thought that I would like to share with you is this. Mr. H. G. Wells calls it the restoration of confidence in the world. This confidence has been shattered in the last twenty years. The individual finds himself helpless in the grasp of a tyrannous state or a tyrannous party which is in control of the state. He is come to fear that momentarily he may be divested of his citizenship, of his freedom, of his possessions at the will of some Duce or Commissar or Fuhrer. The sense of security which nurtures the sense of spiritual dignity in man has been destroyed in our world. If man is to be encouraged to live and plan for the future, to dream and aspire, that sense of confidence must be restored. There must be recreated in the world, following this world war, a fundamental common law for man as man, for the individual as an individual. A new Magna Carta for every man must be announced. "Every man" has been lost in our world. All emphasis is now placed on nations, on groups, on states. The state has become frightfully avaricious. Its appetite has increased appallingly in the last few decades and the individual has been sharply reduced in stature. The other day I saw a picture in one of the important newspapers of the East, a photograph of one of the great demonstrations in Berlin to welcome the Fuhrer on his return from one of his victories. When I first looked at that photograph I couldn't tell whether it was a photograph of human beings or of ants. It was just one vast mass of what turned out to be humanity, in which the individual's delineation was completely obliterated. The group, the mass, is now the unit in the thinking of the world. It wasn't so before. It isn't so in religion -- in yours or mine. All emphasis in our religions was put on the individual, his soul and his relationship to God. Every man was made in the image of God. The Sacred Book begins with the creation of one man and ends with the death of one man. There is an interesting comment by one of our rabbis on one of the verses of the book of Genesis. The Bible says: "This is the generation of man, man, in the singular. The Rabbi



asks why is it written in the singular? Why not "This is the generation of men," or "This is the generation of mankind?" The Rabbi gives this profound answer: "It is put in the singular quite deliberately so that in the future every individual human being shall have the right to say: 'for my sake was the world created'."

This religious conviction is also the central motif of our Declaration of Independence. That thought became the foundation upon which the Founding Fathers established this country. Did you ever ask yourself what is the most challenging phrase in the whole Declaration of Independence? There wasn't anything new in the fact that one country decided to break away from another country. That happened a thousand times before in the history of mankind. What was new in it? This is what is new in it: "We hold these truths to be self evident: that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights." A human being has certain unalienable rights not because he is a member of society, or a citizen, or because he belongs to a party, or because he is a Semite or Aryan, but because he is a human being, a child of God, because he was endowed by his Creator with those rights, which cannot therefore be taken away from him. Among these rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness -- the three most important desiderata of human existence. These rights were not given to man by society or by the state or a party or a parliament, and they cannot, therefore, be taken away from him by these bodies or by dictators. This conviction gave to man, in the last one hundred years, a sense of confidence, self-respect and dignity. He was important. He had rights which could not be taken from him by anyone. He could plan for his family, for his children, for the future. All that has been destroyed in the last twenty years since the totalitarian state began to strip the individual of every right which he possessed.

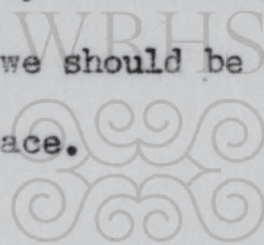
Today the individual stands absolutely helpless in most countries of the earth. There is no court of higher appeal. There is no constitution to appeal to -- no Bill of Rights. If the peace following this war is to make possible the forward



march of civilization it must be a peace which first of all, before it begins to deal with any national or international problem, with any political or economic problem, proclaim with all solemnity a new Magna Carta for the individual human being, to reassert his rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, to reestablish him as the child of God.

These things will come to be, my friends, and that is our prayer and our hope. But they will come to be only after the sworn foe of all these things is first destroyed -- after the Dictator who now bestrides the world like a Colossus is first overthrown. The first important task for religious men is, therefore, the hard and bitter task of helping those who are waging the hard and bitter war against the foe of peace and justice and tolerance.

But even in the very act of helping to prosecute a successful war against the aggressor of mankind, we should be earnestly studying the ways and means of a successful and enduring peace.





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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
OBERLIN COLLEGE

The second series in the

LECTURESHIP ON  
JUDAISM

for 1940 - 41



will be delivered by

RABBI ABBA HILLEL SILVER,  
D.D., Litt.D.

The Temple  
Cleveland, Ohio

on

Tuesday, February 4, 1941



I.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF JUDAISM  
TO DEMOCRACY

11:00 a m.

*Fairchild Chapel*

II.

JUDAISM IN A WORLD AT WAR

12:00 noon

*Finney Chapel*

*Pacific*

III.

JUDAISM AND THE NEW WORLD  
ORDER

3:00 p. m.

*Fairchild Chapel*



The lectureship on Judaism has been made possible in the School of Theology through the good offices of some Jewish friends in Elyria, Ohio. It is concerned chiefly with Talmudic and post-Talmudic law, literature, philosophy and religion. Its function is to promote an understanding of Judaism in its relations with Christianity, of the part of Judaism in the developing history of religion, and to trace the growth of the religious ideas and institutions of the Old Testament in post-Biblical Judaism. Among the distinguished Jewish leaders who have appeared on this lectureship are: Professor Samuel S. Cohon, Dr. Barnett R. Brickner, Dr. Louis Finkelstein, Dr. Solomon Grayzel, Dr. Solomon Goldman, and Dr. Solomon B. Freehof.

Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, rabbi of the Temple, Cleveland, is a graduate of the University of Cincinnati and Hebrew Union College. Before coming to Cleve-



land in 1917, he was rabbi of the Congregation of L'Shem Shamayim, Wheeling. He is a leader in numerous Jewish organizations, among which are the Zionist Organization of America, the Jewish Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Council of Jewish Federation and Welfare Funds. He is the author of *Messianic Speculations in Israel*, *The Democratic Impulse in Jewish History* and *Religion in a Changing World*.

