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Spiritual return and national redemption, 1942.

SPIRITUAL RETURN AND NATIONAL REDEMPTION

Men differ, say our sages, in voice, in appearance and in understanding. That is true also of periods in human history. Each period has its own mind, form and expression.

All men, however, have also much in common -- the attributes of their common humanity. And so do all ages. The changing eras have their changeless modes. And it is with these changeless modes that our religion is concerned.

In 1842, when this congregation was founded, a young man by the name of Abraham Lincoln was still a struggling lawyer in Illinois. The Civil War was still two decades off. Slaves were being sold across the river from here. John Brown and Dred Scott, Fort Sumter, Antietam and the Emancipation Proclamation were still to come. Certainly the structure and culture of our nation have profoundly changed since then. And yet, today, a century later -- in a richer, vaster land, under conditions so very different -- the same struggle for freedom is still going on. The negro is still struggling, in some states, for his political and everywhere for his economic enfranchisement. White men, too, are fighting for economic freedom -- freedom from exploitation, insecurity and want. In 1942, far more than in 1842, Americans are fearful of losing their liberties, their freedom of speech, press, assembly, and worship. Powerful forces are at work seeking to abrogate these freedoms and to substitute for them the new state servitude of the twentieth century. Our nation is at this very moment engaged in a desperate war to preserve these freedoms for itself and for men throughout the world. The entire Civil War complex of ideas, issues, slogans and battle-cries are finding an amazing echo in the world conflict today. Yes, much has changed in the hundred years since the small band of immigrants established their synagogue here -- but much more has remained unchanged. And it is with that which has not changed, which prevails over time and reappears in every age -- the human hunger for freedom, and the incessant assaults upon it -- that our religion is concerned.

The second industrial revolution, the conscious application of scientific method and invention to industry, which was to transform the face of the whole world, was getting under way in this country in the fifth decade of the 19th century. The population, however, was still overwhelmingly agricultural, planting in the South, farming in the North. Less than one-sixth of the people lived in towns of eight thousand and upward. Mass production and the assembly line were of course unknown. Great industries employing hundreds of thousands of men, huge corporations and immense concentration of wealth and power did not exist. Nor did great labor movements and organizations. It is a far cry from the relatively simple economic structure of 1842 to the intricate American economy of our day. Much has changed since those days. And yet -- even in those days there were bitter industrial conflicts, the sharp clash of economic interests, strikes, labor agitation, riots, panics and depressions -- all the turmoil and ferment of our own advanced industrial era. Radical economic theories and schemes of social reconstruction won wide popular interest. Reforms of every sort were in the air.

From the factories and the growing misery of the European proletariat there arise the bitter cries of protests and the demands for economic reform. Within a few years of the founding of this congregation, the Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx was published. The echoes of these protests reverberated on this side of the Atlantic. Robert Owen's socialistic program of the self-contained communities was eagerly received and hopefully incorporated here in such communistic experiments as New Harmony, Brook Farm, Fruitlands and Hopedale. The privileged classes even then feared that radicalism was endangering the industrial system and that the institution of private property was imminently menaced. Yes, much has changed in the last one hundred years -- but much more has remained unchanged -- the cry for justice, and the protest against wrong, oppression and exploitation. Unchanged, too, has remained man's immemorial aspiration towards a fairer and nobler way of life, and his unflagging essays -- many of them hasty, blind and blundering -- to

build such a way of life. And it is with these changeless things that our religion is concerned.

In 1842 the age of inventions and scientific discovery was still very young. The turbine, the dynamo, the combustion engine were unknown. It was still two years before the words from the twenty-third verse of the twenty-third chapter of numbers -- "What hath God wrought?" -- were to be flashed on the Morse code of dots and dashes over the first telegraph line ever to be set up. Steel, gas, oil, the incandescent lamp, the sewing machine, the linotype, the telephone were yet to come, not to mention the more recent inventions -- the automobile, the wireless, the motion picture, the airplane, radio, synthetics and plastics. The epochal discoveries in the field of physics, chemistry and medicine were still things of the future. Those who came to Cincinnati in 1842 came by boat down the Ohio, or over land by stage-coach. There was no railroad west of the Atlantic seaboard. Much, assuredly, has changed since then. And yet much more has remained constant -- man's insatiable curiosity to ferret out the secrets of nature, his outreaching for more power, for keener, sharper tools, for the boundless extension of his senses and his mind. There remains, also, man's half-conscious fear of that very boundless extension, of the very inventions and discoveries which at first amaze and delight him. What has not changed is man's dread of the machine -- the Golem which he himself has conjured up and which he seems unable to bend exclusively to his benign uses and purposes. The year 1842 was still far removed from this year of our centennial which witnesses our proud scientific age descend, cringing and shameful into dug-outs, fox-holes, and air-raid shelters, extinguishing its brilliant lights in black-outs and hiding its face in gas-masks. But even in those days -- long before our modern Samson stood eyeless in Gaza -- men feared the power which they had let loose, and voices spoke in a dark foreboding.

In 1852, Amiel wrote clairvoyantly in his famous Journal: "It is curious to see scientific and realist teaching used everywhere as a means of shifting all

freedom of investigation as addressed to moral questions, under a dead weight of facts. Materialism is the auxiliary doctrine of every tyranny, whether of the one or of the masses. To crush what is spiritual, moral, human — so to speak — in man, by specialising him; to form mere wheels of the great social machine, instead of perfect individuals; to make society and not conscience the center of life, to enslave the soul to things, to de-personalise man — that is the dominant drift of our epoch. Everywhere you may see a tendency to substitute the laws of dead matter (number, mass) for the laws of the moral nature (persuasion, adhesion, faith)....What is threatened to-day is moral liberty, conscience, respect for the soul, the very nobility of man. To defend the soul, its interests, its rights, its dignity, is the most pressing duty for whoever sees the danger."

Yes, much has changed since those early days, but far more has remained unchanged, and it is to these changeless problems that our religion directs itself.

The first of the large waves of immigration which were to bring millions upon millions of new settlers to this "asylum for the oppressed of every land" had but recently set in. Starved and impoverished peasants from Ireland, fleeing from English landowners and a potato famine were swarming across the Atlantic. Between 1830 and 1850, a million Irish arrived. In the very decade when this congregation was founded, German immigrants, fleeing poverty and political oppression, began to arrive in large numbers. But the larger waves of Scandinavian, Italian, Slav, Pole and Jew and those of numerous other races and nationalities which were to make of America a veritable melting pot were yet to come. The nation was racially far more homogeneous than it is today. Much has changed in the complexion of America since then. And yet there is much more that did not change — the American dream ~~of~~ of a new world and a new chance for the disinherited of the earth. That has remained. There has remained, also, the racial bigotry, the religious intolerance and the hatred of the newcomer which even in those early years raised their ugly heads in this country.

The fifth decade saw the rapid growth of nativist sentiment directed largely against Catholics, Irish and Germans who were immigrating in large numbers and whose strength was growing, especially in the larger cities. The movement rapidly assumed ugly forms. Catholic churches were burned in Philadelphia, a Carmelite convent was attacked in Baltimore -- the city which was especially prone to anti-Catholic agitation. Know-nothingism made remarkable headway in the '50s, when it became a powerful political party which swept its candidates into office in a dozen separate states. American national life was embittered by religious and racial conflicts, by bigotry, rioting and blood-shed.

"The same, precisely the same conflicts have always stood as now, with slight shiftings of scene and costume", wrote Emerson in his "Journal" in 1842. And a few years later he wrote: "The superstitions of our age are: The fear of Catholicism, the fear of pauperism, the fear of immigration, the fear of manufacturing interests, the fear of radicalism or democracy, and faith in the steam engine." One need only change the date line, and with a slight editing, it can be entered into any thinking man's diary today. Yes, much has changed in these hundred years -- but the patterns on the loom of time remain the same and it is with patterns of thought and conduct -- deviously traced but essentially similar in design, that our religion concerns itself.

When this congregation was founded there were less than 300 (?) Jews in Cincinnati, less than 50,000 in the United States. The last one hundred years have multiplied these figures a hundred fold. Great Jewish communities, the greatest in our history, have sprung up. Thousands of temples, synagogues, schools and social agencies now dot our land. In 1842 their number was very small and the houses of worship were, with few exceptions, improvised meeting places in halls, stores, or private dwelling places. Not one of the great Reform leaders who were to establish Reform Judaism in the United States had yet arrived in this country.

Only one Reform congregation was in existence. Surely much has changed since those days -- and yet much more has remained unchanged -- the loyalty which prompted Jews to band themselves together in their new homes and quickly to build houses of worship where they might worship God and where their children might be taught the word of God, the generosity with which they provided for the needy and the distressed in their midst, the quick adjustments which they made, and the eagerness with which they responded to the challenge and the opportunity of American citizenship. These are the constant factors in Jewish experience throughout the ages. Unchanged, too, are the spiritual problems which soon came to agitate the men of a hundred years ago. The great battle to reform Judaism broke in its full force in the Jewish communities of Western Europe during the very decade in which this congregation was founded. In 1842, the "Verein der Reformfreunde" was organized in Frankfort. That same year, the first Reform congregation was established in London. It was in the fifth decade, too, that the three historic Rabbinical conferences in Germany were held. The great figures of the movement now appear on the scene and enter the lists -- Geiger, Holdheim, Einhorn, Philippson, Hirsch, Stein and Adler. All the issues over which the religious household of Israel was to be divided during the ensuing years were then raised. Within a few years they were also raised by immigrant reformers in this country -- the authority of tradition, the value of ceremonies, the revision of the prayer book, the use of Hebrew, the role of Israel in the world, Jewish nationalism and the restoration to Palestine. Those same issues are still on the agenda today. On the agenda, too, unfortunately still remains the problem of Jewish national homelessness and anti-Semitism which those hopeful men of a hundred years ago believed to be on the way of imminent solution. The reformers of Germany confidently announced that Germany was their Fatherland -- a rather one-sided announcement. They and their people needed no other homeland, they declared. They were riding the high tide of 19th century liberalism, but they failed to note the dangerous shoals of 19th century nationalism, the trends towards

the centralizing state, and the implications for the Jewish minority of the fast deploying class struggles and economic warfare. Especially dangerous was this oversight in a land like Germany, which was only just then recovering, after two centuries, from the physical and spiritual devastations of the wars of religion, among a people notoriously and periodically swayed by waves of hysterical religiosity, hysterical metaphysics and hysterical politics, whose foremost religious leader in the 16th century could indulge in an anti-Semitism so filthy, vile and scatological as to be matched only by the anti-Semitism of the foremost political leader of Germany in the 20th century.

These reformers were thinking of progress as most men of their day did, in terms of a steady, horizontal advance, an unbroken march forward, rather than in terms of a succession of cyclical movements, which, over and again, come full again and which result only in a slight net advance for mankind. There were ample warnings all around them, portents which less romantic eyes did appraise more realistically -- signs of an irreconcilable opposition, an indurate racial, cultural, economic and religious hostility which had not and would not accept the humanistic and democratic synthesis which a revolutionary middle class capitalism had popularized in the 19th century, and which was destined sooner or later to disintegrate.

This many-sided and variously motivated anti-Semitism gained momentum at the same time and almost at the same pace as Jewish political emancipation. It was not a reaction. It was a parallel development just as the Inquisition and the Ghetto paralleled the Renaissance and the Reformation.

This is the tragic fact which seems to escape so many students of anti-Semitism. The story of Jewish emancipation in Europe from the day after the French Revolution to the day before the Nazi Revolution is the story of political positions captured in the face of stubborn and sullen opposition, which left the emancipated minority encamped within an unbeaten and unreconciled opposition. At the slightest provocation, and as soon as things got out of order, the opposition

returned to the attack and inflicted grievous wounds. In our day, stirred by the great politico-economic struggles which were tearing nations apart, this never-failing, never-reconciled opposition swept over the Jewish political and economic positions in Europe and completely demolished them. There is an electric chord which connects the era of Fichte in Germany with its feral cry of hep-hep, and the era of Hitler and its cry "Judah verrecke". And so for the rest of Europe. The Damascus affair of 1840 links up with the wide-spread reaction after the Revolution of 1848, the Mortara Affair in Italy, the Christian-Socialist movement in the era of Bismarck, the Tisza-Ezlar Affair in Hungary, the revival of the blood accusation in Bohemia, the pogroms in the eighties in Russia, "La France Juive" and the Dreyfus Affair in France.

The World War which made the world safe for democracy and granted the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe not only the rights of citizenship but even minority rights, brought also in its wake the most thorough-going, brutal and annihilationist anti-Semitism that Israel has ever experienced. And now again, in the second World War, many Jews are hoping to achieve through an Allied victory what an Allied victory failed to give them after the last war — what a whole century of enlightenment, liberalism and intellectual progress failed to give them — peace and security. They are again confusing formal political equality with immunity from economic and social pressures. Yes, much has changed in the last one hundred years, but much more has resisted change. The immemorial problem of our national homelessness, the principal source of our millennial tragedy, remains as stark and as menacing as ever. Yet Jews, especially those of our persuasion, are again trying to circumvent it with wishful thinking, with day-dreaming about an Atlantic Charter or the Four Freedoms, with clever homiletics or are hoping to lay it to rest with patriotic charms and incantations — just as they did a hundred years ago — and through all the intervening years.

The saintly man who preached and taught here, who laid such strong and sure foundations for the Household of Israel in America, and whose memory will forever be invoked in blessing by a grateful and remembering people, was wise and practical in so many ways. But even he was possessed of a premature confidence that mankind was rapidly approaching the era of a universal faith and a universal republic and declared in 1875:

"Before our very eyes, the world moves onward into the golden age of redeemed humanity and the fraternal union of nations, as our prophets thousands of years ago have predicted. We are fast approaching the universal democratic republic with civil and religious liberty, cemented by the world's advanced intelligence. This century settles old accounts. It is progressive". And the following year he declared: "The Jews do not think of going back to Palestine among Beduins and sandy deserts, and the nations in power do not want them to go there. No European country today would give permission to the Jews to emigrate with their wealth or even without it...It is all dream and fantasy. The world goes not backward, its march is onward, and this will expunge the old race prejudices as well as the religious superstitions of the races...."

Men spoke in such heart-warming ecstasy of the future because their hopes were high-poised, because they found themselves in a New World of glorious freedom and of unlimited horizons. The Old World, with its inbred hates and envenomed memories was far away. Here was sweet security and a new spring-tide for the tired heart of man.

But the Old World was really always here, too, in the hearts and minds of men, in their cultures and religions, in their group loyalties and prejudices. It was only adjusting itself to a new environment. It was not wholly or radically transformed.

And now in our day the new world is steadily approximating the shape and contour of the old. America is far less removed now, far less isolated and far less

different. It is no longer a distant land on the rim of a vast ocean. It is now the center of the world. Round it revolve the fates of peoples of two hemispheres. Politically, economically, culturally, it is now enmeshed in a common destiny with the rest of the world. We have to fight very hard today to keep what was really fresh and new from being completely submerged. Our lines, as Jews, are also falling into the well-known pattern of Israel's millennial experience in diaspora. For a time we were able to regard ourselves as onlookers sympathetic to be sure, but onlookers, nevertheless, of our peoples' experiences in the Old World. Ours, we knew, was a different fate. To a degree, however, we already share, and reluctantly enough, the common and inescapable destiny.

Why, then, should we celebrate centennials of religious institutions? What seek we among the forms and faces of things long since dead? What shall we bring back from the frontiers of distant years? Not the evidences of change. They are of little moment and there is little consolation in them. But rather the evidences of changelessness and continuity. In that knowledge there is both pride and humility and the strength which belongs to mature men.

Judaism is concerned with the unchanging needs of man and of society, the needs which take on new forms in new settings, but which remain fundamentally the same, the basic and perennial conflicts and adjustments in individual and collective lives. From Abraham and Moses to the last of the great and the wise teachers of our faith, some of whom enriched the life of this congregation and this community, there stretches an unbroken chain of spiritual continuity, changeless principles in mutable forms which were the fixed points of reference for each generation. Each generation faced the same problems: how to achieve freedom under the sovereignty of God, justice under the mandate of His law, and dignity in kinship with Him; how knowledge was to be made whole through the fear of God, and courage heightened through trust in Him; how brotherhood and peace could be covenanted in the sight of Him who is Father of all men and all nations.

Judaism has offered men the faith and the code sufficient and adequate to every age. Men have not heeded it. Jews have not heeded it. Theirs was the inadequacy, theirs the insufficiency. Many believed that mankind could dispense with Israel's faith and code, and could achieve freedom, justice, dignity, courage, brotherhood and peace without reference to God and the techniques of religion. But they achieved only dictatorship, slavery, littleness of stature, fear, hate and war. They put their hope not in spiritual conversion, not in moral regeneration but in a precipitous scientific and intellectual progress which has now hurled rider, horse and ~~shattered~~ chariot alike into one bloody and ruinous tangle.

The leaders of Reform Judaism, too, were encouraged to expect the quick advent of a universal religion of peace and good will, not because of any religious revivalism which was transpiring in the world in their day — there was none — but because of that same breath-taking scientific advance. They drew unwarranted conclusions from irrelevant premises. There is never any forward movement in society without an inward movement in man.

The pioneer reformers and their disciples after them were good and loyal Jews but they were too zealous to "modernize" Judaism, and too self-conscious about modernity. There was too much emphasis in their thought and speech upon "reform", "change", "progress", too little upon "rebirth", "return", "tracing back to God". Nothing is so shallow and ephemeral as modernity. The very word suggests a mode, a fashion, an improvised and passing version which has its practical utility, to be sure, but which must not be confused with that which is of the essence and of the eternal. They were too eager to accommodate, to facilitate, and strange as it may seem, to conform — not to tradition, of course, but to the most recent thought and practice of their day — the tradition of recency. They were sufficiently intellectual in their critique, but religious reformation is achieved only by mystics who are concerned not with the recency of their doctrines, but with the immediacy of their religious experience.

Great spiritual movements break not only with the past, but with the present as well. They never attempt to "modernize" religion but to restore it to its timeless spiritual essence, to its enduring distinctiveness through all times and ages, to that which like the flowing current moves and changes and yet remains the same. Quite consciously they are movements of "return" to marvellous and decisive beginnings so as to recapture an ageless truth. They never set out to adjust men to their social, political or economic environment. They aim to tear them free from their environment. They demand of them surrender, self-denial, renunciation of worldly comforts and interests, and they offer them the compensations of spiritual blessings and peace. The greatest religions were those which made the greatest demands upon their followers and which called for the most rigorous disciplines.

Prophetic and Pharisaic Judaism were stern and exacting in their demands upon the individual and the nation. They did not attempt to "modernize" the religion of Israel, and to bring it into a pleasant conformity with the civilization of the heathen or pagan world about them. They imposed a distinctive and distinguishing regimen upon their people and called upon them to be not ~~a~~ like unto all other nations, but unlike. This was not meant in any political sense, as some preachers have so accomodatingly sermonized -- for the prophets and the rabbis were never opposed to the Jewish state or to the survival of the Jewish nation as such. It was meant entirely in a spiritual sense, as the text clearly states.

Spiritual reform and regeneration are known among our people as "Tshuvah" -- "Return" -- and the way of return is the hard way of soul-searching, contemplation, contrition and sacrifice. The aim of such a reform is not to adjust a man to a morally imperfect society but to make him morally more demanding of himself and of society. It is not to lift burdens, but to assume new and nobler burdens. It is to make of the regenerated man who has finally found his spiritual base in God a fighter for the Kingdom of God, a man of strife and contention to the whole unregenerate world. It is to release man from all forms of spiritual servitude

only to put him into the unrelenting thralldom of spiritual services wherein man alone can be free.

For all their loyalty, learning and high-mindedness, many of the leaders of our movement over-estimated the importance of their ritual reforms. It was not long before it became clear that people could refrain from praying from an expurgated and abridged prayer book quite as consistently as from an unabridged one, that a Jew could fail to observe a one-day holiday quite as readily as a two-day one, and that even services of great dignity and beauty could fail to impress and attract if the disposition to worship is not there. It must be clear by now that the omission from the prayer book of the prayer for the restoration of Zion did not appease the gentile opposition, and did not succeed in making more secure the position of the Jew in the German Fatherland. It must also be clear by now that the Jew who spoke a perfect German could be disliked as vehemently as he who spoke a perfect or imperfect Yiddish. Those who were finally driven out of Germany were Jews who had become perfectly adjusted and perfectly modernized. This is not to suggest that many of the reforms were unnecessary. But looking at them from the perspective of history, which reformers frequently sacrifice for an apocalypse, they appear far less consequential than they seemed at first.

Surely in our day the need for this type of reform is over. It was over a long time ago. What is needed today is not the innovation or renovation or reformation or reconstruction of Judaism, but the conversion of the Jew to his faith. Tshuvah — "Return" — that is the note which the world's great Judgment Day and our own vast tribulation is sounding in the camp of Israel.

It is no longer a question of less ritual or of more, of Reform, Conservatism or Orthodoxy, but of Godlessness, secularism and materialism which have blighted our people, along with all other peoples, but which we, because of our unique position in the world, can least of all afford. It is hopeless to try to reach the heart of our people or to serve them in this their tragic hour by reviving old slogans and battle-cries, or discarded rituals, or by confronting them with the competitive

claims of Orthodoxy, Conservatism or Reform. None of these has scored any significant victory in our day, and life is not attacking them all. Organizationally, Reform Judaism has not only failed to make progress in recent years, but it has actually retrogressed in relation to the increased Jewish population in the United States. The ranks of Conservatism and Orthodoxy have been replenished largely through immigration. Nor can Reform Judaism hope to save or vitalize itself by furbishing up anew its traditional opposition to Jewish nationalism. The bitterest foes of Zionism are laymen who never enter our Temples. Their opposition is motivated not by religion or by any consistent and worthy philosophy of Jewish life and destiny, but by sheer escapism. Nor will Conservative and Orthodox Judaism save or vitalize themselves through the mere championing of Jewish nationalism. Nor is Jewish philanthropy or civic protective activities adequate for the spiritual emergencies of our people. The former is only a phase of our religion, the latter only a phase of the world's irreligion. Our lay-leaders would do well to turn from their all-out absorption in relief and defense and devote more of their thought and energy to the spiritual and educational needs of their people, who, knowing less and less of their people's life history and literature, are losing more and more their perspective and their morale.

The answer today must be Judaism — that which is carved out of the everlasting rock — that which is neither old nor new, which, in its spiritual essence of final excellence and validity, comes under the head of the dynamic spiritual permanences of our faith and religious culture — that which burned on the lips of Isaiah and sang in the heart of the Psalmist, that which Moses heard in the burning bush, and Hillel shared with the proselyte — that which satisfied the souls of generations of our ancestors who walked in varied garb under many skies, who knew all the bitterness and suffering which we, their descendants are coming to know, but who knew much else besides.

We must not be the pensioners by a by-gone dream. We must not be dreamers who idealize the past, or visionaries who falsify the future. But we do have an eternal and sufficient truth which alone can stay the hearts and uplift the spirits of our ravaged generation of Jews, and into the hearts of this desolate generation, we must try to bring that healing and strengthening. Many will not listen to us. We must not pursue the many and distort our message and cast about for new techniques to please their tastes. God singled out our people for the burden of His truth.

Isaiah, too, was baffled by his generation which was stricken in every part of its body like ours, whose whole head was sick and whose whole heart was faint, yet persisted in straying away more and more. But, as in the days of Isaiah, there will always be the remnant who may be made to understand the meaning and the healing of ^aReligion of Return —

We should offer our people the refuge of their historic faith, a faith meet for mature men, which holds out no promise of quick victory, no escape into illusions or self-delusions, and no immunity from sorrow and smiting, but which does offer men the dignity of working with God in a world which He created for man to dwell in on terms defined by Him, and the comfort of belonging to a brave and gallant band of men who from the days of Abraham to this marched through the long centuries beaconing the world's darkness with the torch of their faith in God and in justice, freedom, brotherhood and peace.

This faith of which we must offer them they must make their own by means of the proved technique of Jewish religious life: learning, study, contemplation, the disciplines of the devotional life — prayer and religious practices and observances — few or many — it does not matter much — old or new — that too does not matter much — just so there goes with them — the intent — active and transforming, and the disciplines of the ethical life — the doing of good deeds pleasing to God. There is no other technique. There never has

been. The Jewish layman must himself actively seek God. Seeking God is the most common term applied to religion and the religious man in our Bible

The synagogue and the rabbi can only help the layman in his quest. They can do no more.

It would help us all -- rabbis and laymen alike -- to remember that in things of the spirit, progress does not consist in going forward or going backward, but only in going inward. This going inward will give us that defense in depth which no sudden penetrations of spear-heads of attack, of persecution, of hate, of doubt or of fear, will ever be able to destroy.

It is this faith of Spiritual Return which we should offer our people and with it the immemorial task of national restoration, of National Return. These two returns, the one spiritual, the other national, are the two elements of our ancient covenant. What this promised redemption is to be is clearly defined.

With such a faith and such a task -- the two elements of our ancient covenant -- Jews will be able to face their future unflinchingly and purposefully. They will move into the darkness ahead, confident that God is there. They will accept suffering, knowing that it is God's discipline, and they will learn to abide in patience and wait for the happier day knowing that God does not deceive those who put their trust in Him, nor has He ever forsaken Israel.

"For I, the Lord, change not and ye, O sons of Jacob, will not be destroyed."

ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER IN CINCINNATI, OHIO ON SATURDAY
MORNING, FEBRUARY 28, 1942.

Men differ, say our sages, in voice, in appearance and in understanding. That is true also of periods in human history. Each period has its own mind, form and expression.

All men, however, have also much in common -- the attributes of their common humanity. And so do all ages. The changing eras have their changeless modes. And it is with these changeless modes that our religion is concerned.

In 1842, when this congregation was founded, a young man by the name of Abraham Lincoln was still a struggling lawyer in Illinois. The Civil War was still two decades off. Slaves were being sold across the river from here. John Brown and Dred Scott, Fort Sumter, Antietam and the Emancipation Proclamation were still to come. Certainly the structure and culture of our nation have profoundly changed since then. And yet, today, a century later -- in a richer, vaster land, under conditions so very different -- the same struggle for freedom is still going on. The negro is still struggling, in some states, for his political and everywhere for his economic enfranchisement. White men, too, are fighting for economic freedom -- freedom from exploitation, insecurity and want. In 1942, far more than in 1842, Americans are fearful of losing their liberties, their freedom of speech, press, assembly, and worship. Powerful forces are at work seeking to abrogate these freedoms and to substitute for them the new state servitude of the twentieth century. Our nation is at this very moment engaged in a desperate war to preserve these freedoms for itself and for men throughout the world. The entire Civil War complex of ideas, issues, slogans and battle-cries are finding an amazing echo in the world conflict today. Yes, much has changed in the hundred years since the small band of immigrants established their synagogue here -- but more has remained unchanged. And it is with that which has not changed, which prevails over time and reappears in every age -- the human hunger for freedom, and

the incessant assaults upon it -- that our religion is concerned.

The second industrial revolution, the conscious application of scientific method and invention to industry, which was to transform the face of the whole world, was getting under way in this country in the fifth decade of the 19th century. The population, however, was still overwhelmingly agricultural, planting in the South, farming in the North. Less than one-sixth of the people lived in towns of eight thousand and upward. Mass production and the assembly line were of course unknown. Great industries employing hundreds of thousands of men, huge corporations and immense concentration of wealth and power did not exist. Nor did great labor movements and organizations. It is a far cry from the relatively simple economic structure of 1842 to the intricate American economy of our day. Much has changed since those days. And yet -- even in those days there were bitter industrial conflicts, the sharp clash of economic interests, strikes, labor agitation, riots, panics and depressions -- all the turmoil and ferment of our own advanced industrial era. Radical economic theories and schemes of social reconstruction won wide popular interest. Reforms of every sort were in the air.

From the factories and the growing misery of the European proletariat there arose the bitter cries of protests and the demands for economic reform. Within a few years of the founding of this congregation, the Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx was published. The echoes of these protests reverberated on this side of the Atlantic. Robert Owen's socialistic program of the self-contained communities was eagerly received and hopefully incorporated here in such communistic experiments as New Harmony, Brook Farm, Fruitlands and Hopedale. The privileged classes even then feared that radicalism was endangering the industrial system and that the institution of private property was imminently menaced. Yes, much has changed in the last one hundred years -- but much more has remained unchanged -- the cry for justice and protest ~~the~~ against wrong, oppression and exploitation. Unchanged, too,

has remained man's immemorial aspiration towards a fairer and nobler way of life, and his unflagging essays -- many of them hasty, blind and blundering -- to build such a way of life. And it is with these changeless things that our religion is concerned.

In 1842 the age of inventions and scientific discovery was still very young. The turbine, the dynamo, the ^{internal} combustion engine were unknown. It was still two years before the words from the twenty-third verse of the twenty-third chapter of Numbers -- "What hath God wrought?" -- were to be flashed on the Morse Code of dots and dashes over the first telegraph line ever to be set up. Steel, gas, oil, the incandescent lamp, the sewing machine, the lino-type, the telephone were yet to come, not to mention the more recent inventions -- the automobile, the wireless, the motion picture, the airplane, radio, ^y synthetics and plastics. The epochal discoveries in the field of physics, chemistry and medicine were still things of the future. Those who came to Cincinnati in 1842 came by boat down the Ohio, or over land by stage-coach. There was no railroad west of the Atlantic seaboard. Much, assuredly, has changed since then. And yet much more has remained constant -- man's insatiable curiosity to ferret out the secrets of nature, his outreaching for more power, for keener, sharper tools, for the boundless extension of his senses and his mind. There remains, also, man's half-conscious fear of that very boundless extension, of the very inventions and discoveries which at first amaze^h and delighted^h him. What has not changed is man's dread of the machine -- the Golem which he himself has conjured up and which he seems unable to bend exclusively to his benign uses and purposes. The year 1842 was still far removed from this year of our centennial which witnesses our proud scientific age descend, cringing and shameful into dug-outs, fox-holes, and air-raid shelters, extinguishing its brilliant lights in black-outs and hiding its face in gas-masks. But even in those days -- long before our modern Samson stood eyeless in Gaza -- men feared the power which they had let loose, and voices spoke in dark foreboding.

In 1852, Amiel wrote clairvoyantly in his famous Journal: "It is curious to see scientific and realist teaching used everywhere as a means of shifting all freedom of investigation as addressed to moral questions, under a dead weight of facts. Materialism is the auxiliary doctrine of every tyranny, whether of the one or of the masses. To crush what is spiritual, moral, human -- so to speak -- in man, by specialising him; to form mere wheels of the great social machine, instead of perfect individuals; to make society and not conscience the center of life, to enslave the soul to things, to de-personalise man -- that is the dominant drift of our epoch. Everywhere you may see a tendency to substitute the laws of dead matter (number, mass) for the laws of the moral nature (persuasion, adhesion, faith)...What is threatened to-day is moral liberty, conscience, respect for the soul, the very nobility of man. To defend the soul, its interests, its rights, its dignity, is the most pressing duty for whoever sees the danger."

Yes, much has changed since those early days, but far more has remained unchanged, and it is to these changeless problems that our religion directs itself.

The first of the large waves of immigration which were to bring millions upon millions of new settlers to this "asylum for the oppressed of every land" had but recently set in. Starved and impoverished peasants from Ireland, fleeing from English landowners and a potato famine were swarming across the Atlantic. Between 1830 and 1850, a million Irish arrived. In the very decade when this congregation was founded, German immigrants, fleeing poverty and political oppression, began to arrive in large numbers. But the larger waves of Scandinavian, Italian, Slav, Pole and Jew and those of numerous other races and nationalities which were to make of America veritable melting pot were yet to come. The nation was racially far more homogeneous than it is today. Much has changed in the complexion of America since then. And yet there is much more that did not change -- the American dream of a new world and a new chance for the disinherited of the earth.

That has remained. There has remained also the racial bigotry, the religious intolerance and the hatred of the newcomer which even in those early years raised their ugly heads in this country.

The fifth decade saw the rapid growth of nativist sentiment directly largely against Catholics, Irish and Germans who were immigrating in large numbers and whose strength was growing, especially in the larger cities. The movement rapidly assumed ugly forms. Catholic churches were burned in Philadelphia, a Carmelite convent was attacked in Baltimore -- the city which was especially prone to anti-Catholic agitation. Know-Nothingism made remarkable headway in the '50s, when it became a powerful political party which swept its candidates into office in a dozen separate states. American national life was embittered by religious and racial conflicts, by bigotry, rioting and blood-shed.

"The same, precisely the same conflicts have always stood as now, with slight shiftings of scene and costume", wrote Emerson in his "Journal" in 1842. And a few years later he wrote: "The superstitions of our age are: The fear of Catholicism, the fear of pauperism, the fear of immigration, the fear of manufacturing interests, the fear of radicalism or democracy, and faith in the steam engine." One need only change the date line, and with a slight editing, it can be entered into any thinking man's diary today. Yes, much has changed in these hundred years -- but the patterns on the loom of time remain the same and it is with patterns of thought and conduct -- deviously traced but essentially similar in design, that our religion concerns itself.

When this congregation was founded there were less than ²⁰⁰⁰ ~~200~~ Jews in Cincinnati, less than 50,000 in the United States. The last one hundred years have multiplied these ^{ten fold,} figures a hundred fold. Great Jewish communities, the greatest in our history, have sprung up. Thousands of temples, synagogues, schools and social

agencies now dot our land. In 1842 their number was very small and the houses of worship were, with few exceptions, improvised meeting places in halls, stores or private dwelling places. Not one of the great Reform leaders who were to establish Reform Judaism in the United States had yet arrived in this country. Only one Reform congregation was in existence. Surely much has changed since those days -- and yet much more has remained unchanged -- the loyalty which prompted Jews to band themselves together in their new homes and quickly to build houses of worship where they might worship God and where their children might be taught the word of God, the generosity with which they provided for the needy and the distressed in their midst, the quick adjustments which they made, and the eagerness with which they responded to the challenge and the opportunity of American citizenship. These are the constant factors in Jewish experience throughout the ages. Unchanged, too, are the spiritual problems which soon came to agitate the men of a hundred years ago.

TP The great battle to reform Judaism broke in its full force in the Jewish communities of Western Europe during the very decade in which this congregation was founded. In 1842, the "Verein der Reformfreunde" was organized in Frankfort. That same year, the first Reform congregation was established in London. It was in the fifth decade, too, that the three historic Rabbinical conferences in Germany were held. The great figures of the movement now appear on the scene and enter the lists -- Geiger, Holdheim, Einhorn, Philippson, Hirsch, Stein and Adler. All the issues over which the religious household of Israel was to be divided during the ensuing years were then raised. Within a few years they were also raised by immigrant reformers in this country -- the authority of tradition, the value of ceremonies, the revision of the prayer book, the use of Hebrew, the role of Israel in the world, Jewish nationalism and the restoration to Palestine. Those same issues are still on the agenda today. On the agenda, too, unfortunately still remains the problem of

Jewish national homelessness and anti-Semitism which those hopeful men of a hundred years ago believed to be on the way of imminent solution. The reformers of Germany confidently announced that Germany was their Fatherland -- a rather one-sided announcement. They and their people needed no other homeland, they declared. They were riding the high tide of 19th century liberalism, but they failed to note the dangerous shoals of 19th century nationalism, the trends towards the centralizing state, and the implications for the Jewish minority of the fast deploying class struggles and economic warfare. Especially dangerous was this over-sight in a land like Germany, which was only just then recovering, after two centuries, from the physical and spiritual devastations of the wars of religion, among a people notoriously and periodically swayed by waves of hysterical religiosity, hysterical metaphysics and hysterical politics, whose foremost religious leader in the 16th century could indulge in an anti-Semitism so filthy, vile and scatological as to be matched only by the anti-Semitism of the foremost political leader of Germany in the 20th century.

These reformers were thinking of progress as most men of their day did, in terms of a steady, horizontal advance, an unbroken march forward, rather than in terms of a succession of cyclical movements, which, over and ~~over~~ again, come full again and which result only in a slight net advance for mankind. There were ample warnings all around them, portents which less romantic eyes did appraise more realistically -- signs of an irreconcilable opposition, an indurate racial, cultural, economic and religious hostility which had not and would not accept the humanistic and democratic synthesis which a revolutionary middle class capitalism had popularized in the 19th century, and which was destined sooner or later to disintegrate.

This many-sided and variously motivated anti-Semitism gained momentum at the same time and almost at the same pace as Jewish political emancipation. It was not a reaction. It was a parallel development just as the Inquisition and the Ghetto

paralleled the Renaissance and the Reformation.

This is the tragic fact which seems to escape so many students of anti-Semitism. The story of Jewish emancipation in Europe from the day after the French Revolution to the day before the Nazi Revolution is the story of political positions captured in the face of stubborn and sullen opposition, which left the emancipated minority encamped within an unbeaten and unreconciled opposition. At the slightest provocation, and as soon as things got out of order, the opposition returned to the attack and inflicted grievous wounds. In our day, stirred by the great politico-economic struggles which were tearing nations apart, this never-failing, never-reconciled opposition swept over the Jewish political and economic positions in Europe and completely demolished them. There is an electric chord which connects the era of Fichte in Germany with its feral cry of hep-hep, and the era of Hitler and its cry 'Judah verrecke'. And so for the rest of Europe. The Damascus affair of 1840 links up with the wide-spread reaction after the Revolution of 1848, the Mortara Affair in Italy, the Christian-Socialist movement in the era of Bismarck, the Tisza-Ezlar Affair in Hungary, the revival of the blood accusation in Bohemia, the pogroms in the eighties in Russia, "La France Juive" and the Dreyfus Affair in France.

The World War which made the world safe for democracy and granted the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe not only the rights of citizenship but even minority rights, brought also in its wake the most thorough-going, brutal and annihilationist anti-Semitism that Israel has ever experienced. And now again, in the second World War, many Jews are hoping to achieve through an Allied victory what an Allied victory failed to give them after the last war -- what a whole century of enlightenment, liberalism and intellectual progress failed to give them -- peace and security. They are again confusing formal political equality with immunity from economic and

social pressures. Yes, much has changed in the last one hundred years, but much more has resisted change. The immemorial problem of our national homelessness, the principal source of our millennial tragedy, remains as stark and as menacing as ever. Yet Jews, especially those of our persuasion, are again trying to circumvent it with wishful thinking, with day-dreaming about ~~our~~ ^{an} Atlantic Charter or the Four Freedoms, with clever homiletics, or are hoping to lay it to rest with patriotic charms and incantations -- just as they did a hundred years ago -- and through all the intervening years.

The saintly man who preached and taught here, who laid such strong and sure foundations for the Household of Israel in America, and whose memory will forever be invoked in blessing by a grateful and remembering people, was wise and practical in so many ways. But even he was possessed of a premature confidence that mankind was rapidly approaching the era of a universal faith and a universal republic and declared in 1875:

"Before our very eyes, the world moves onward into the golden age of redeemed humanity and the fraternal union of nations, as our prophets thousands of years ago have predicted. We are fast approaching the universal democratic republic with civil and religious liberty, cemented by the world's advanced intelligence. This century settles old accounts. It is progressive." And the following year he declared: "The Jews do not think of going back to Palestine among Beduins and sandy deserts, and the nations in power do not want them to go there. No European country today would give permission to the Jews to emigrate with their wealth or even without it...It is all dream and fantasy. The world goes not backward, its march is onward, and this will expunge the old race prejudices as well as the religious superstitions of the races..."

Men spoke in such heart-warming ecstasy of the future because their hopes were high-poised, because they found themselves in a New World of glorious freedom and of unlimited horizons. The Old World, with its inbred hates and envenomed memories was far away. Here was sweet security and a new spring-tide for the tired heart of man.

But the Old World was really always here, too, in the hearts and minds of men, in their cultures and religions, in their group loyalties and prejudices. It was only adjusting itself to a new environment. It was not wholly or radically transformed.

And now in our day the new world is steadily approximating the shape and contour of the old. America is far less removed now, far less isolated and far less different. It is no longer a distant land on the rim of a vast ocean. It is now the center of the world. Round it revolve the fates of peoples of two hemispheres. Politically, economically, culturally, it is now enmeshed in a common destiny with the rest of the world. We have to fight very hard today to keep what was really fresh and new from being completely submerged. Our lines, as Jews, are also falling into the well-known pattern of Israel's millennial experience in diaspora. For a time ^{we} were able to regard ourselves as onlookers, sympathetic to be sure, but onlookers nevertheless of our peoples' experiences in the Old World. Ours, we knew, was a different fate. To a degree, however, we already share, and reluctantly enough, the common and inescapable destiny.

Why, then, should we celebrate centennials of religious institutions? What seek we among the forms and faces of things long since dead? What shall we bring back from the frontiers of distant years? Not the evidences of change. They are of little moment and there is little consolation in them. But rather the evidences of changelessness and continuity. In that knowledge there is both pride and humility and the strength which belongs to mature men.

Judaism is concerned with the unchanging needs of man and of society, the needs which take on new forms in new settings, but which remain fundamentally the same, the basic and perennial conflicts and adjustments in individual and collective lives. From Abraham and Moses to the last of the great and the wise teachers of our faith, some of whom enriched the life of this congregation and this community, there stretches an unbroken chain of spiritual continuity, changeless principles in mutable forms which were the fixed points of reference for each generation. Each generation faced the same problems: how to achieve freedom under the sovereignty of God, justice under the mandate of His law, and dignity in kinship with Him; how knowledge was to be made whole through the fear of God, and courage heightened through trust in Him; how brotherhood and peace could be covenanted in the sight of Him who is Father of all men and all nations.

Judaism has offered men the faith and the code sufficient and adequate to every age. Men have not heeded it. Jews have not heeded it. Theirs was the inadequacy, theirs the insufficiency. Many believed that mankind could dispense with Israel's faith and code, and could achieve freedom, justice, dignity, courage, brotherhood and peace without reference to God and the techniques of religion. But they achieved only dictatorship, slavery, littleness of stature, fear, hate and war. They put their hope not in spiritual conversion, not in moral regeneration but in a precipitous scientific and intellectual progress which has now hurled rider, horse and chariot alike into one bloody and ruinous tangle.

The leaders of Reform Judaism, too, were encouraged to expect the quick advent of a universal religion of peace and good will, not because of any religious revivalism which was transpiring in the world in their day -- there was none -- but because of that same breath-taking scientific advance. They drew unwarranted conclusions from irrelevant premises. There is never any forward movement in society without an inward movement in man.

The pioneer reformers and their disciples after them were good and loyal Jews but they were too zealous to "modernize" Judaism, and too self-conscious about modernity. There was too much emphasis in their thought and speech upon "reform", "change", "progress", too little upon "rebirth", "return", "tracing back to God." Nothing is so shallow and ephemeral as modernity. The very word suggests a mode, a fashion, an improvised and passing version which has its practical utility, to be sure, but which must not be confused with that which is of the essence and of the eternal. They were too eager to accommodate, to facilitate, and strange as it may seem, to conform -- not to tradition, of course, but to the most recent thought and practice of their day -- the tradition of recency. They were sufficiently intellectual in their critique, but religious reformation is achieved only by mystics who are concerned not with the recency of their doctrines, but with the immediacy of their religious experience.

Great spiritual movements break not only with the past, but with the present as well. They never attempt to "modernize" religion but to restore it to its timeless spiritual essence, to its enduring distinctiveness through all times and ages, to that which like the flowing current moves and changes and yet remains the same. Quite consciously they are movements of "return" to marvellous and decisive beginnings so as to recapture an ageless truth. They never set out to adjust men to their social, political or economic environment. They aim to tear them free from their environment. They demand of them surrender, self-denial, renunciation of worldly comforts and interests, and they offer them the compensations of spiritual blessings and peace. The greatest religions were those which made the greatest demands upon their followers and which called for the most rigorous disciplines.

Prophetic and Pharisaic Judaism were stern and exacting in their demands upon the individual and the nation. They did not attempt to "modernize" the religion of Israel, and to bring it into a pleasant conformity with the civilization

of the heathen or pagan world about them. They imposed a distinctive and distinguishing regimen upon their people and called upon them to be not like unto all other nations, but unlike. This was not meant in any political sense, as some preachers have so accomodatingly sermonized -- for the prophets and the rabbis were never opposed to the Jewish state or to the survival of the Jewish nation as such. It was meant entirely in a spiritual sense, as the text clearly states.

Spiritual reform and regeneration are known among our people as "Tshuvah" -- "Return" -- and the way of return is the hard way of soul-searching, contemplation, contrition and sacrifice. The aim of such a reform is not to adjust a man to a morally imperfect society but to make him morally more demanding of himself and of society. It is not to lift burdens, but to assume new and nobler burdens. It is to make of the regenerated man who has finally found his spiritual base in God a fighter for the Kingdom of God, a man of strife and contention to the whole unregenerate world. It is to release man from all forms of spiritual servitude only to put him into the unrelenting thralldom of spiritual services wherein man alone can be free.

For all their loyalty, learning and high-mindedness, many of the leaders of our movement over-estimated the importance of their ritual reforms. It was not long before it became clear that people could refrain from praying from an expurgated and abridged prayer book quite as consistently as from an unabridged one, that a Jew could fail to observe a one-day holiday quite as readily as a two-day one, and that even services of great dignity and beauty could fail to impress and attract if the disposition to worship is not there. It must be clear by now that the omission from the prayer book of the prayer for the restoration of Zion did not appease the gentile opposition, and did not succeed in making more secure the position of the Jew in the German Fatherland. It must also be clear by now that the Jew who spoke a perfect German could be disliked as vehemently as he who spoke a perfect or imperfect Yiddish. Those who were finally driven out of Germany were Jews who had become perfectly adjusted and perfectly modernized. This is not to suggest

that many of the reforms were unnecessary. But looking at them from the perspective of history, which reformers frequently sacrifice for an apocalypse, they appear far less consequential than they seemed at first.

Surely in our day the need for this type of reform is over. It was over a long time ago. What is needed today is not the innovation or renovation or reformation or reconstruction of Judaism, but the conversion of the Jew to his faith. Tshuvah --

"Return" -- that is the note which the world's great Judgment Day and our own vast tribulation is sounding in the camp of Israel. *"When evil will overtake thee... return thou unto the Lord, thy God."*

→ It is no longer a question of less ritual or of more, of Reform, Conservatism or Orthodoxy, but of Godlessness, secularism and materialism which have blighted our people, along with all other peoples, but which we, because of our unique position in the world, can least of all afford. It is hopeless to try to reach the heart of our people or to serve them in this their tragic hour by reviving old slogans and battle-cries, or discarded rituals, or by confronting them with the competitive claims of Orthodoxy, Conservatism or Reform. None of these has scored any significant victory in our day, and life is now attacking them all. Organizationally, Reform Judaism has not only failed to make progress in recent years, but it has actually retrogressed in relation to the increased Jewish population in the United States. The ranks of Conservatism and Orthodoxy have been replenished largely through immigration. Nor can Reform Judaism hope to save or vitalize itself by refurbishing up anew its traditional opposition to Jewish nationalism. The bitterest foes of Zionism are laymen who never enter our Temples. Their opposition is motivated not by religion or by any consistent and worthy philosophy of Jewish life and destiny, but by sheer escapism. Nor will Conservative and Orthodox Judaism save or vitalize themselves through the mere championing of Jewish nationalism. Nor is Jewish philanthropy or civic protective activities adequate for the spiritual emergencies of our people. The

former is only a phase of our religion, the latter only a phase of the world's irreligion. Our lay leaders would do well to turn from their all-out absorption in relief ~~aid~~ and defense and devote more of their thought and energy to the spiritual and educational needs of their people, who, knowing less and less of their people's life, history and literature, are losing more and more ~~of~~ their perspective and their morale.

The answer today must be Judaism ^{integral} -- that which is carved out of the everlasting rock -- that which is neither old nor new, which, in its spiritual essence of final excellence and validity, comes under the head of: "nothing in the Torah is ^{either} earlier or later," the dynamic spiritual permanences of our faith and religious culture -- that which burned on the lips of Isaiah and sang in the heart of the Psalmist, that which Moses heard in the burning bush, and Hillel shared with the proselyte -- that which satisfied the souls of generations of our ancestors who walked in varied garb under many skies, who knew all the bitterness and suffering which we, their descendants are coming to know, but who knew much else besides.

We must not be the pensioners of a by-gone dream. We must not be dreamers who idealize the past, or visionaries who falsify the future. But we do have an eternal and sufficient truth which alone can stay the hearts and uplift the spirits of our ravaged generation of Jews, and into the hearts of this desolate generation, we must try to bring that healing and strengthening. Many will not listen to us. We must not ^{try to} pursue the many and distort our message and cast about for new techniques ^{in order} to please their tastes. God singled out our people for the burden of His truth ^{not because you were many... for you are the smallest among the nations!} Isaiah, too, was baffled by his generation which was stricken in every part of its body, like ours, whose whole head was sick and whose whole heart was faint, yet persisted in straying away more and more. But, as in the days of Isaiah, there will always be the remnant who may be made to understand the meaning and the healing of a Religion of Return: "the remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, unto the God of might."

We should offer our people the refuge of their historic faith, a faith meet for mature men, which holds out no promise of quick victory, no escape into illusions or self-delusions, and no immunity from sorrow and smiting, but which does offer men the dignity of working with God in a world which He created for man to dwell in on terms defined by Him, and the comfort of belonging to a brave and gallant band of men who from the days of Abraham to this marched through the long centuries beaoning the world's darkness with the torch of their faith in God and in justice, freedom, brotherhood and peace.

This faith of "Return and Good Deeds" which we ^{can} ~~must~~ offer them they must make their own by means of the proved technique of Jewish religious life: learning, study, contemplation, the disciplines of the devotional life -- prayer and religious practices and observances, few or many -- it does not matter much old or new -- that too, does not matter much -- just so there goes with them ^{"Kavanah"} the intent, active and transforming, and the disciplines of the ethical life -- the doing of good deeds pleasing to God. There is no other technique. There never has been. The Jewish layman must himself actively seek God. Seeking God is the most common term applied to religion and the religious man in our Bible. ^{And there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find Him, if you will seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.} The Synagogue and the Rabbi can only help the layman in his quest. They can do no more.

It would help us all -- Rabbis and laymen alike -- to remember that in things of the spirit, progress does not consist in going forward or going backward, but in going inward. "From the depths" This going inward will give us that defense in depth which no sudden penetrations of spear-heads of attack, of persecution, of hate, of doubt or of fear, will ever be able to destroy.

It is this faith of Spiritual Return which we should offer our people and with it the immemorial task of national restoration, of National Return. These

two returns, the one spiritual, the other national, are the two elements of our ancient covenant. *"Return unto Me, and I will redeem thee."* What this

promised redemption is to be is clearly defined. *"He declares unto Jerusalem that it be re-established and unto the cities of Judaea that they be rebuilt."*

Teshuvah and Ge'ulah
With such a faith and such a task -- the two elements of our ancient covenant -- Jews will be able to face their future unflinchingly and purposefully. They will move into the darkness ahead, confident that God is there. They will accept suffering, knowing that it is God's discipline, and they will learn to abide in patience and wait for the happier day knowing that God does not deceive those who put their trust in Him, nor has He ever forsaken Israel.

✱ "For I, the Lord, change not and ye, O sons of Jacob, will not be destroyed."



SPIRITUAL RETURN AND NATIONAL REDEMPTION

BY

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SPIRITUAL RETURN AND NATIONAL REDEMPTION

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

Men differ, say our sages, in voice, in appearance and in understanding. That is true also of periods in human history. Each period has its own mind, form and expression.

All men, however, have also much in common — the attributes of their common humanity. And so do all ages. The changing eras have their changeless modes. And it is with these changeless modes that our religion is concerned.

In 1842, when this congregation was founded, a young man by the name of Abraham Lincoln was still a struggling lawyer in Illinois. The Civil War was still two decades off. Slaves were being sold across the river from here. John Brown and Dred Scott, Fort Sumter, Antietam and the Emancipation Proclamation were still to come. Certainly the structure and culture of our nation have profoundly changed since then. And yet, today, a century later — in a richer, vaster land, under conditions so very different — the same struggle for freedom is still going on. The negro is still struggling, in some states, for his political and everywhere for his economic enfranchisement. White men, too, are fighting for economic freedom — freedom from exploitation, insecurity and want. In 1942, far more than in 1842, Americans are fearful of losing their liberties, their freedom of speech, press, assembly, and worship. Powerful forces are at work seeking to abrogate these freedoms and to substitute for them the new state servitude of the twentieth century. Our nation is at this very moment engaged in a desperate war to preserve these freedoms for itself and for men throughout the world. The entire Civil War complex of ideas, issues, slogans and battle-cries are finding an amazing echo in the world conflict today. Yes, much has changed in the hundred years since the small band of

immigrants established their synagog here — but much more has remained unchanged. And it is with that which has not changed, which prevails over time and reappears in every age — the human hunger for freedom, and the incessant assaults upon it — that our religion is concerned.

The second industrial revolution, the conscious application of scientific method and invention to industry, which was to transform the face of the whole world, was getting under way in this country in the fifth decade of the 19th century. The population, however, was still overwhelmingly agricultural, planting in the South, farming in the North. Less than one-sixth of the people lived in towns of eight thousand and upward. Mass production and the assembly line were of course unknown. Great industries employing hundreds of thousands of men, huge corporations and immense concentration of wealth and power did not exist. Nor did great labor movements and organizations. It is a far cry from the relatively simple economic structure of 1842 to the intricate American economy of our day. Much has changed since those days. And yet — even in those days there were bitter industrial conflicts, the sharp clash of economic interests, strikes, labor agitation, riots, panics and depressions — all the turmoil and ferment of our own advanced industrial era. Radical economic theories and schemes of social reconstruction won wide popular interest. Reforms of every sort were in the air.

From the factories and the growing misery of the European proletariat there arose the bitter cries of protests and the demands for economic reform. Within a few years of the founding of this congregation, the Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx was published. The echoes of these protests reverberated on this side of the Atlantic. Robert Owen's socialistic program of the self-contained communities was eagerly received and hopefully incorporated here in such communistic experiments as New Harmony, Erock Farm, Fruitlands and Hopedale. The privileged classes even then feared that radicalism was endangering the industrial system and that the institution of private property was imminently menaced. Yes, much has changed in the last one hundred years — but much more has remained unchanged — the cry for justice, and the protest against wrong, oppression and exploitation. Unchanged, too, has remained

man's immemorial aspiration towards a fairer and nobler way of life, and his unflagging essays — many of them hasty, blind and blundering — to build such a way of life. And it is with these changeless things that our religion is concerned.

In 1842 the age of inventions and scientific discovery was still very young. The turbine, the dynamo, the combustion engine were unknown. It was still two years before the words from the twenty-third verse of the twenty-third chapter of Numbers — "What hath God wrought?" — were to be flashed on the Morse code of dots and dashes over the first telegraph line ever to be set up. Steel, gas, oil, the incandescent lamp, the sewing machine, the linotype, the telephone were yet to come, not to mention the more recent inventions — the automobile, the wireless, the motion picture, the airplane, radio, synthetics and plastics. The epochal discoveries in the field of physics, chemistry and medicine were still things of the future. Those who came to Cincinnati in 1842 came by boat down the Ohio, or over land by stagecoach. There was no railroad west of the Atlantic seaboard. Much, assuredly, has changed since then. And yet much more has remained constant — man's insatiable curiosity to ferret out the secrets of nature, his outreaching for more power, for keener, sharper tools, for the boundless extension of his senses and his mind. There remains, also, man's half-conscious fear of that very boundless extension, of the very inventions and discoveries which at first amaze and delight him. What has not changed is man's dread of the machine — the *Golem* which he himself has conjured up and which he seems unable to bend exclusively to his benign uses and purposes. The year 1842 was still far removed from this year of our centennial which witnesses our proud scientific age descend, cringing and shameful into dug-outs, fox-holes, and air-raid shelters, extinguishing its brilliant lights in black-outs and hiding its face in gas-masks. But even in those days — long before our modern Samson stood eyeless in Gaza — men feared the power which they had let loose, and voices spoke in dark foreboding.

In 1852, Amiel wrote clairvoyantly in his famous Journal: "It is curious to see scientific and realist teaching used everywhere as a means of shifting all freedom of investigation as addressed to moral questions, under a dead weight of facts. Materialism is the auxiliary

doctrine of every tyranny, whether of the one or of the masses. To crush what is spiritual, moral, human — so to speak — in man, by specialising him; to form mere wheels of the great social machine, instead of perfect individuals; to make society and not conscience the center of life, to enslave the soul to things, to de-personalise man — that is the dominant drift of our epoch. Everywhere you may see a tendency to substitute the laws of dead matter (number, mass) for the laws of the moral nature (persuasion, adhesion, faith) ... What is threatened to-day is moral liberty, conscience, respect for the soul, the very nobility of man. To defend the soul, its interests, its rights, its dignity, is the most pressing duty for whoever sees the danger."

Yes, much has changed since those early days, but far more has remained unchanged, and it is to these changeless problems that our religion directs itself.

The first of the large waves of immigration which were to bring millions upon millions of new settlers to this "asylum for the oppressed of every land" had but recently set in. Starved and impoverished peasants from Ireland, fleeing from English landowners and a potato famine were swarming across the Atlantic. Between 1830 and 1850, a million Irish arrived. In the very decade when this congregation was founded, German immigrants, fleeing poverty and political oppression, began to arrive in large numbers. But the larger waves of Scandinavian, Italian, Slav, Pole and Jew and those of numerous other races and nationalities which were to make of America a veritable melting pot were yet to come. The nation was racially far more homogeneous than it is today. Much has changed in the complexion of America since then. And yet there is much more that did not change — the American dream of a new world and a new chance for the disinherited of the earth. That has remained. There has remained, also, the racial bigotry, the religious intolerance and the hatred of the newcomer which even in those early years raised their ugly heads in this country.

The fifth decade saw the rapid growth of nativist sentiment directed largely against Catholics, Irish and Germans who were immigrating in large numbers and whose strength was growing, especially in the larger cities. The movement rapidly assumed ugly

forms. Catholic churches were burned in Philadelphia, a Carmelite convent was attacked in Baltimore — the city which was especially prone to anti-Catholic agitation. Know-nothingism made remarkable headway in the '50s, when it became a powerful political party which swept its candidates into office in a dozen separate states. American national life was embittered by religious and racial conflicts, by bigotry, rioting and blood-shed.

"The same, precisely the same conflicts have always stood as now, with slight shiftings of scene and costume", wrote Emerson in his "Journal" in 1842. And a few years later he wrote: "The superstitions of our age are: The fear of Catholicism, the fear of pauperism, the fear of immigration, the fear of manufacturing interests, the fear of radicalism or democracy, and faith in the steam engine." One need only change the date line, and with a slight editing, it can be entered into any thinking man's diary today. Yes, much has changed in these hundred years — but the patterns on the loom of time remain the same and it is with patterns of thought and conduct — deviously traced but essentially similar in design, that our religion concerns itself.

When this congregation was founded there were less than 2000 Jews in Cincinnati, less than 50,000 in the United States. The last one hundred years have multiplied these figures ten fold, a hundred fold. Great Jewish communities, the greatest in our history, have sprung up. Thousands of temples, synagogues, schools and social agencies now dot our land. In 1842 their number was very small and the houses of worship were, with few exceptions, improvised meeting places in halls, stores, or private dwelling places. Not one of the great Reform leaders who were to establish Reform Judaism in the United States had yet arrived in this country. Only one Reform congregation was in existence. Surely much has changed since those days — and yet much more has remained unchanged — the loyalty which prompted Jews to band themselves together in their new homes and quickly to build houses of worship where they might worship God and where their children might be taught the word of God, the generosity with which they provided for the needy and the distressed in their midst, the quick adjustments which they made, and the eagerness with which they responded to the challenge

and the opportunity of American citizenship. These are the constant factors in Jewish experience throughout the ages. Unchanged, too, are the spiritual problems which soon came to agitate the men of a hundred years ago.

The great battle to reform Judaism broke in its full force in the Jewish communities of Western Europe during the very decade in which this congregation was founded. In 1842, the *Verein der Reformfreunde* was organized in Frankfort. That same year, the first Reform congregation was established in London. It was in the fifth decade, too, that the three historic rabbinical conferences in Germany were held. The great figures of the movement now appear on the scene and enter the lists — Geiger, Holdheim, Einhorn, Philippson, Hirsch, Stein and Adler. All the issues over which the religious household of Israel was to be divided during the ensuing years were then raised. Within a few years they were also raised by immigrant reformers in this country — the authority of tradition, the value of ceremonies, the revision of the prayer book, the use of Hebrew, the role of Israel in the world, Jewish nationalism and the restoration to Palestine. Those same issues are still on the agenda today. On the agenda, too, unfortunately still remains the problem of Jewish national homelessness and anti-Semitism which those hopeful men of a hundred years ago believed to be on the way of imminent solution. The reformers of Germany confidently announced that Germany was their Fatherland — a rather one-sided announcement. They and their people needed no other homeland, they declared. They were riding the high tide of 19th century liberalism, but they failed to note the dangerous shoals of 19th century nationalism, the trends towards the centralizing state, and the implications for the Jewish minority of the fast deploying class struggles and economic warfare. Especially dangerous was this oversight in a land like Germany, which was only just then recovering, after two centuries, from the physical and spiritual devastations of the wars of religion, among a people notoriously and periodically swayed by waves of hysterical religiosity, hysterical metaphysics and hysterical politics, whose foremost *religious* leader in the 16th century could indulge in an anti-Semitism so filthy, vile and scato-

logical as to be matched only by the anti-Semitism of the foremost political leader of Germany in the 20th century.

These reformers were thinking of progress as most men of their day did, in terms of a steady, horizontal advance, an unbroken march forward, rather than in terms of a succession of cyclical movements, which, over and again, come full again and which result only in a slight net advance for mankind. There were ample warnings all around them, portents which less romantic eyes did appraise more realistically — signs of an irreconcilable opposition, an indurate racial, cultural, economic and religious hostility which had not and would not accept the humanistic and democratic synthesis which a revolutionary middle class capitalism had popularized in the 19th century, and which was destined sooner or later to disintegrate.

This many-sided and variously motivated anti-Semitism gained momentum at the same time and almost at the same pace as Jewish political emancipation. It was not a reaction. It was a parallel development just as the Inquisition and the Ghetto paralleled the Renaissance and the Reformation.

This is the tragic fact which seems to escape so many students of anti-Semitism. The story of Jewish emancipation in Europe from the day after the French Revolution to the day before the Nazi Revolution is the story of political positions captured in the face of stubborn and sullen opposition, which left the emancipated minority encamped within an unbeaten and unreconciled opposition. At the slightest provocation, and as soon as things got out of order, the opposition returned to the attack and inflicted grievous wounds. In our day, stirred by the great politico-economic struggles which are tearing nations apart, this never-failing, never-reconciled opposition swept over the Jewish political and economic positions in Europe and completely demolished them. There is an electric cord which connects the era of Fichte in Germany with its feral cry of *hep-hep*, and the era of Hitler and its cry "*Juden verrecke*". And so for the rest of Europe. The Damascus affair of 1840 links up with the wide-spread reaction after the Revolution of 1848, the Mortara Affair in Italy, the Christian-Socialist movement in the era of Bismarck, the Tisza-Ezlar Affair in Hungary, the revival of the

blood accusation in Bohemia, the pogroms in the eighties in Russia, "La France Juive" and the Dreyfus Affair in France.

The World War which made the world safe for democracy and granted the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe not only the rights of citizenship but even minority rights, brought also in its wake the most thorough-going, brutal and annihilationist anti-Semitism that Israel has ever experienced. And now again, in the second World War, many Jews are hoping to achieve through an Allied victory what an Allied victory failed to give them after the last war — what a whole century of enlightenment, liberalism and intellectual progress failed to give them — peace and security. They are again confusing formal political equality with immunity from economic and social pressures. Yes, much has changed in the last one hundred years, but much more has resisted change. The immemorial problem of our national homelessness, the principal source of our millennial tragedy, remains as stark and as menacing as ever. Yet Jews, especially those of our persuasion, are again trying to circumvent it with wishful thinking, with day-dreaming about an Atlantic Charter or the Four Freedoms, with clever homiletics or are hoping to lay it to rest with patriotic charms and incantations — just as they did a hundred years ago — and through all the intervening years.

The saintly man, Isaac M. Wise, who preached and taught here, who laid such strong and sure foundations for the Household of Israel in America, and whose memory will forever be invoked in blessing by a grateful and remembering people, was wise and practical in so many ways. But even he was possessed of a premature confidence that mankind was rapidly approaching the era of a universal faith and a universal republic. He declared in 1875:

"Before our very eyes, the world moves onward into the golden age of redeemed humanity and the fraternal union of nations, as our prophets thousands of years ago have predicted. We are fast approaching the universal democratic republic with civil and religious liberty, cemented by the world's advanced intelligence. This century settles old accounts. It is progressive". And the following year he declared: "The Jews do not think of going back to Palestine among Beduins and sandy deserts, and the nations in power do not

want them to go there. No European country today would give permission to the Jews to emigrate with their wealth or even without it . . . It is all dream and fantasy. The world goes not backward, its march is onward, and this will expunge the old race prejudices as well as the religious superstitions of the races . . . "

Men spoke in such heart-warming ecstasy of the future because their hopes were high-poised, because they found themselves in a New World of glorious freedom and of unlimited horizons. The Old World, with its inbred hates and envenomed memories was far away. Here was sweet security and a new spring-tide for the tired heart of man.

But the Old World was really always here, too, in the hearts and minds of men, in their cultures and religions, in their group loyalties and prejudices. It was only adjusting itself to a new environment. It was not wholly or radically transformed.

And now in our day the new world is steadily approximating the shape and contour of the old. America is far less removed now, far less isolated and far less different. It is no longer a distant land on the rim of a vast ocean. It is now the center of the world. Round it revolve the fates of peoples of two hemispheres. Politically, economically, culturally, it is now enmeshed in a common destiny with the rest of the world. We have to fight very hard today to keep what was really fresh and new from being completely submerged. Our lines, as Jews, are also falling into the well-known pattern of Israel's millennial experience in diaspora. For a time we were able to regard ourselves as onlookers, sympathetic to be sure, but onlookers, nevertheless, of our peoples' experiences in the Old World. Ours, we knew, was a different fate. To a degree, however, we already share, and reluctantly enough, the common and inescapable destiny.

Why, then, should we celebrate centennials of religious institutions? What seek we among the forms and faces of things long since dead? What shall we bring back from the frontiers of distant years? Not the evidences of change. They are of little moment and there is little consolation in them. But rather the evidences of changelessness and continuity. In that knowledge there is both pride and humility and the strength which belongs to mature men.

Judaism is concerned with the unchanging needs of man and of society, the needs which take on new forms in new settings, but which remain fundamentally the same, the basic and perennial conflicts and adjustments in individual and collective lives. From Abraham and Moses to the last of the great and the wise teachers of our faith, some of whom enriched the life of this congregation and this community, there stretches an unbroken chain of spiritual continuity, changeless principles in mutable forms which were the fixed points of reference for each generation. Each generation faced the same problems: how to achieve freedom under the sovereignty of God, justice under the mandate of His law, and dignity in kinship with Him; how knowledge was to be made whole through the fear of God, and courage heightened through trust in Him; how brotherhood and peace could be covenanted in the sight of Him who is Father of all men and all nations.

Judaism has offered men the faith and the code sufficient and adequate to every age. Men have not heeded it. Jews have not heeded it. *Theirs* was the inadequacy, *theirs* the insufficiency. Many believed that mankind could dispense with Israel's faith and code, and could achieve freedom, justice, dignity, courage, brotherhood and peace without reference to God and the techniques of religion. But they achieved only dictatorship, slavery, littleness of stature, fear, hate and war. They put their hope not in spiritual conversion, not in moral regeneration but in a precipitous scientific and intellectual progress which has now hurled rider, horse and chariot alike into one bloody and ruinous tangle.

The leaders of Reform Judaism, too, were encouraged to expect the quick advent of a universal religion, of peace and good will, not because of any religious revivalism which was transpiring in the world in their day — there was none — but because of that same breath-taking scientific advance. They drew unwarranted conclusions from irrelevant premises. There is never any forward movement in society without an inward movement in man.

The pioneer reformers and their disciples after them were good and loyal Jews but they were too zealous to "modernize" Judaism, and too self-conscious about modernity. There was too much emphasis in their thought and speech upon "reform", "change",

"progress", too little upon "rebirth", "return", "tracing back to God". Nothing is so shallow and ephemeral as modernity. The very word suggests a mode, a fashion, an improvised and passing version which has its practical utility, to be sure, but which must not be confused with that which is of the essence and of the eternal. They were too eager to accommodate, to facilitate, and, strange as it may seem, to conform — not to tradition, of course, but to the most recent thought and practice of their day — the tradition of recency. They were sufficiently intellectual in their critique, but religious reformation is achieved only by mystics who are concerned not with the recency of their doctrines, but with the immediacy of their religious experience.

Great spiritual movements break not only with the past, but with the present as well. They never attempt to "modernize" religion but to restore it to its timeless spiritual essence, to its enduring distinctiveness through all times and ages, to that which like the flowing current moves and changes and yet remains the same. Quite consciously they are movements of "return" to marvellous and decisive beginnings so as to recapture an ageless truth. They never set out to adjust men to their social, political or economic environment. They aim to tear them free from their environment. They demand of them surrender, self-denial, renunciation of worldly comforts and interests, and they offer them the compensations of spiritual blessings and peace. The greatest religions were those which made the greatest demands upon their followers and which called for the most rigorous disciplines.

Prophetic and Pharisaic Judaism were stern and exacting in their demands upon the individual and the nation. They did not attempt to "modernize" the religion of Israel, and to bring it into a pleasant conformity with the civilization of the heathen or pagan world about them. They imposed a distinctive and distinguishing regimen upon their people and called upon them to be not like unto all other nations, but *unlike*. This was not meant in any political sense, as some preachers have so accomodatingly sermonized — for the prophets and the rabbis were never opposed to the Jewish state or to the survival of the Jewish nation as such. It was meant entirely in a spiritual sense, as the text clearly reveals.

Spiritual reform and regeneration are known among our people as *Tshuvah* — "Return" — and the way of return is the hard way of soul-searching, contemplation, contrition and sacrifice. The aim of such a reform is not to adjust a man to a morally imperfect society but to make him morally more demanding of himself and of society. It is not to lift burdens, but to assume new and nobler burdens. It is to make of the regenerated man who has finally found his spiritual base in God a fighter for the Kingdom of God, a man of strife and contention to the whole unregenerate world. It is to release man from all forms of spiritual servitude only to put him into the unrelenting thralldom of spiritual services wherein man alone can be free.

For all their loyalty, learning and high-mindedness, many of the leaders of our movement over-estimated the importance of their ritual reforms. It was not long before it became clear that people could refrain from praying from an expurgated and abridged prayer book quite as consistently as from an unabridged one, that a Jew could fail to observe a one-day holiday quite as readily as a two-day one, and that even services of great dignity and beauty could fail to impress and attract if the disposition to worship is not there. It must be clear by now that the omission from the prayer book of the prayer for the restoration of Zion did not appease the gentile opposition, and did not succeed in making more secure the position of the Jew in the German Fatherland. It must also be clear by now that the Jew who spoke a perfect German could be disliked as vehemently as he who spoke a perfect or imperfect Yiddish. Those who were finally driven out of Germany were Jews who had become perfectly adjusted and perfectly modernized. This is not to suggest that many of the reforms were unnecessary. But looking at them from the perspective of history, which reformers frequently sacrifice for an apocalypse, they appear far less consequential than they seemed at first.

Surely in our day the need for this type of reform is over. It was over a long time ago. What is needed today is not the innovation or renovation or reformation or reconstruction of Judaism, but the conversion of the Jew to his faith. *Tshuvah* — "Return" — that is the note which the world's great Judgment Day and our own vast

tribulation is sounding in the camp of Israel. 'בצר לך--ושבת ער ה' אלהיך. It is no longer a question of less ritual or of more, of Reform, Conservatism or Orthodoxy, but of Godlessness, secularism and materialism which have blighted our people, along with all other peoples, but which we, because of our unique position in the world, can least of all afford. It is hopeless to try to reach the heart of our people or to serve them in this their tragic hour by reviving old slogans and battle-cries, or discarded rituals, or by confronting them with the competitive claims of Orthodoxy, Conservatism or Reform. None of these has scored any significant victory in our day, and life is now attacking them all. Organizationally, Reform Judaism has not only failed to make progress in recent years, but it has actually retrogressed in relation to the increased Jewish population in the United States. The ranks of Conservatism and Orthodoxy have been replenished largely through immigration. Nor can Reform Judaism hope to save or vitalize itself by furbishing up anew its traditional opposition to Jewish nationalism. The bitterest foes of Zionism are laymen who never enter our Temples. Their opposition is motivated not by religion or by any consistent and worthy philosophy of Jewish life and destiny, but by sheer escapism. Nor will Conservative and Orthodox Judaism save or vitalize themselves through the mere championing of Jewish nationalism. Nor is Jewish philanthropy or civic protective activities adequate for the spiritual emergencies of our people. The former is only a phase of our religion, the latter only a phase of the world's irreligion. Our lay-leaders would do well to turn from their all-out absorption in relief and defense and devote more of their thought and energy to the spiritual and educational needs of their people, who, knowing less and less of their people's life, history and literature, are losing more and more their perspective and their morale.

The answer today must be Judaism — that which is carved out of the everlasting rock — that which is neither old nor new, which, in its spiritual essence of final excellence and validity, comes under the head of *אין מוקדם ומאחר בתורה*, the dynamic spiritual permanences of our faith and religious culture — that which burned on the lips of Isaiah and sang in the heart of the Psalmist, that which Moses heard in the burning bush, and Hillel shared with the prose-

lyte — that which satisfied the souls of generations of our ancestors who walked in varied garb under many skies, who knew all the bitterness and suffering which we, their descendants, are coming to know, but who knew much else besides.

We must not be the pensioners of a by-gone dream. We must not be dreamers who idealize the past, or visionaries who falsify the future. But we do have an eternal and sufficient truth which alone can stay the hearts and uplift the spirits of our ravaged generation of Jews, and into the hearts of this desolate generation, we must try to bring that healing and strengthening. Many will not listen to us. We must not pursue the many and distort our message and cast about for new techniques to please their tastes. God singled out our people for the burden of His truth — **לא מרבכם — כי אתם המעט מכל** — **העמים**. "Not because you were many . . . for you are the smallest among the nations." Isaiah, too, was baffled by his generation which was stricken in every part of its body like ours, whose whole head was sick and whose whole heart was faint, yet persisted in straying away more and more. But, as in the days of Isaiah, there will always be the remnant who may be made to understand the meaning and the healing of a Religion of Return — **שאר ישוב, שאר יעקב, אל אל** — **גבור**. We should offer our people the refuge of their historic faith, a faith meet for mature men, which holds out no promise of quick victory, no escape into illusions or self-delusions, and no immunity from sorrow and smiting, but which does offer men the dignity of working with God in a world which He created for man to dwell in on terms defined by Him, and the comfort of belonging to a brave and gallant band of men who from the days of Abraham to this marched through the long centuries beaconing the world's darkness with the torch of their faith in God and in justice, freedom, brotherhood and peace.

The faith of **תשובה ומעשים טובים** — Return and Good Deeds — which we must offer them they must make their own by means of the proved technique of Jewish religious life: learning, study, contemplation, the disciplines of the devotional life — prayer and religious practices and observances — few or many — it does not matter much — old or new — that too does not matter much — just so there goes with them **כוונה** — the Intent, active and transforming,

and the disciplines of the ethical life — the doing of good deeds pleasing to God. There is no other technique! There never has been. The Jewish layman must himself actively seek God. Seeking God is the most common term applied to religion and the religious man in our Bible ובקשחם משם את ה' אלהיך ומצאת כי תדרשנו בכל לבבך. ובכל נפשך. The synagog and the rabbi can only help the layman in his quest. They can do no more.

It would help us all — rabbis and laymen alike — to remember that in things of the spirit, progress does not consist in going forward or going backward, but only in going inward — ממעמקים — “out of the depths.” This going inward will give us that defense in depth which no sudden penetrations of spear-heads of attack, of persecution, of hate, of doubt or of fear, will ever be able to destroy.

It is this faith of Spiritual Return which we should offer our people, and with it the immemorial task of national restoration, of *National* Return. These two returns, the one spiritual, the other national, are the two elements of our ancient covenant. שובה אלי — כי נאלתיך. “Return unto Me and I will redeem thee”. What this promised redemption is to be is clearly defined. האומר לירושלים תושב ולערי יהודה תבנינה. “That saith of Jerusalem: She shall be inhabited; and of the cities of Judah: They shall be rebuilt”. With such a faith and such a task — the two elements of our ancient covenant — תשובה and גאולה — “Return and Redemption”, Jews will be able to face their future unflinchingly and purposefully. They will move into the darkness ahead, confident that God is there. They will accept suffering, knowing that it is God’s discipline, and they will learn to abide in patience and wait for the happier day knowing that God does not deceive those who put their trust in Him, nor has He ever forsaken Israel. אני ה' לא שניתי ואחם בני יעקב לא כליתם. “For I, the Lord, change not and ye, O sons of Jacob, will not be destroyed.”