



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

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Abraham J. Feldman, 1963.

RABBI JUDAH HANASI, THE FAMED REDACTOR OF THE MISHNA, LISTED THE EXCELLENCIES OF SEVERAL OF THE GREAT MASTERS WHO PRECEDED HIM. AMONG THEM WAS ELAZAR B. AZARIAH. HE CALLED HIM *סלחא דספיקא* -- "A SPICE-DEALER'S BASKET". WHEN PEOPLE COME TO THE SPICE-DEALER AND SAY TO HIM: "HAVE YOU GOOD OIL WITH YOU? HAVE YOU FINE OINTMENT? HAVE YOU BALSAM? HE REPLIES: "YES, I HAVE." THEY FIND THAT HE HAS EVERYTHING. SO IT IS WITH ELAZAR B. AZARIAH. WHEN SCHOLARS COME TO HIM AND QUESTION HIM ON MATTERS OF TORAH, HE CAN ANSWER. ON MISHNA, HE CAN ANSWER, AND SO ON MIDRASH, HALACHA AND AGADA. THE SCHOLARS FIND THAT HE HAS EVERYTHING AND WHEN THEY DEPART FROM HIM THEY ARE SATISFIED AND ENRICHED.

RABBI FELDMAN, TOO, IS AT HOME IN ALL BRANCHES OF JEWISH LEARNING.

MY DEAR FRIENDS: WHAT YOU ARE DOING TO RABBI FELDMAN
TONIGHT WAS DONE TO ME A FEW MONTHS AGO IN CLEVELAND FOR I, ALSO,
WAS SEVENTY THIS YEAR.

MANY YEARS AGO IN THE DAYS OF THE CZARS IN RUSSIA, TWO JEWS
FOUND THEMSELVES IN MOSCOW. ONE HAD A PASSPORT AND THE OTHER
DID NOT....

WE BOTH HAVE THE SAME MALADY, RABBI FELDMAN AND I, ^{Septuagenarianism} AND WE
ARE GETTING THE SAME MEDICINE -- TESTIMONIAL BANQUETS.

WRHS



No Vices - Traump Break -

Septuagenarianism

MY DEAR FRIENDS: TO REACH SEVENTY YEARS IS NO GREAT
ACHIEVEMENT. YOU STAY AROUND LONG ENOUGH, AND THERE YOU
HAVE IT! SUDDENLY YOU ARE SEVENTY. BUT, TO BE THE RABBI OF ONE
CONGREGATION CONTINUOUSLY FOR ³⁸ ~~FORTY-FIVE~~ YEARS, THAT, MY FRIENDS,
IS A COLLOSAL ACHIEVEMENT -- ALMOST A TRIUMPH! ASK ANYBODY!
ASK MOSES, HIMSELF, THE GREAT LAW-GIVER, WHO LED THE CHILDREN
OF ISRAEL FOR FORTY YEARS AND WAS FORCED TO COMPLAIN: "HOW CAN
I BEAR ALONE THE WEIGHT AND BURDEN OF YOU AND YOUR STRIFE?", ^{aggravated}
CONFIDENTIALLY, THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, TOO, HAD LEGITIMATE
GROUNDS FOR COMPLAINT. TO BE SADDLED WITH ONE LEADER -- AND A
DETERMINED ONE AT THAT -- FOR FORTY LONG YEARS -- IS NOT EASY,
EITHER. BUT, AS WE LEARN FROM SCRIPTURE, IT ALL WORKED OUT WELL
IN THE END. MOSES LOVED HIS PEOPLE AND HE FORGAVE THEM. THE
PEOPLE LOVED MOSES AND THEY FORGAVE HIM, AND TOGETHER THEY
MOVED ON TO THE PROMISED LAND.

married 45 years - Helen - In color under fire!

For
4 Decades of
Extraordinary Work
Under Fire

I AM HAPPY TO BE HERE AND TO JOIN WITH YOU IN PAYING
TRIBUTE TO YOUR DISTINGUISHED RABBI -- A LIFE-LONG FRIEND OF
MINE -- A FRIEND SINCE BOYHOOD. I HAVE FOLLOWED HIS CAREER,
AS HE HAS MINE, WITH DEEP, UNFAILING INTEREST. I WATCHED WITH
PRIDE THE UNFOLDING OF HIS NOTABLE MINISTRY. I ADMIRERD THE
CONSTANCY OF HIS LOYALTIES AND DEDICATION SINCE EARLY MANHOOD.

Difficult to think back then was easy - can't remember
no faults



RABBI FELDMAN HAS BEEN A LEADER WHO EARLY IN LIFE SAW HIS TASK AND HIS MISSION CLEARLY, AND WHO, IN QUIET CONFIDENCE, STEADILY MOVED TOWARD HIS FIXED OBJECTIVES ACROSS THE BROKEN AND SHIFTING TERRAIN OF SOME OF THE MOST TURBULENT YEARS IN HISTORY. HE HAS NOT BEEN A DOCTRINAIRE. HE HAS NEVER LACKED VISION, NOR HAS HE BEEN A CLOISTERED INTELLECTUAL. THERE WAS ALWAYS A STEADY, RESOLUTE QUEST TO HIS MINISTRY BUT NEVER A RESTLESS INSURGENCY. HE KNEW HIS OWN MIND, EVER AN OPEN MIND, NEVER AN INCONCLUSIVE MIND.

THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A DIGNITY TO HIS MINISTRY ~~WHICH HAS BEEN SO NOTABLE~~, A HIGH ELEVATION AND DISTINCTION OF TONE IN WORD AND MANNER -- A QUALITY WHICH WE WOULD ALL LIKE TO ASSOCIATE WITH THE TERM, RABBI. WHENEVER RABBI FELDMAN SPEAKS HE SPEAKS ELOQUENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY, BUT WITH RESTRAINT AND RESPONSIBILITY. ALWAYS HE IS THE TEACHER -- NEVER THE AGITATOR. HE SEEKS NOT TO INCITE MEN INTO ADMIRATION, BUT TO PERSUADE THEM INTO CONVICTION. HE DOES NOT ATTEMPT TO IMPRESS THE WORLD WITH SKILLFULLY MANIPULATED PUBLICITY. I RATHER THINK THAT HE SUSPECTED RIGHT ALONG THAT THE MOST PUFFED UP NUMERAL OF ALL NUMERALS IS THE ZERO.

HE DID NOT CONVERT HIS SYNAGOGUE INTO A NOISY MART WHICH OFFERED ALL KINDS OF WARES TO ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE. HE REFUSED TO PUT UP A FALSE FACADE OF SPURIOUS ACTIVITIES TO DELUDE EITHER HIMSELF OR OTHERS. HE KNEW THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A HEALTHY,

(5)

_____ RUDDY COMPLEXION AND A FEVERISH ONE. AS FAR AS IT IS
HUMANLY POSSIBLE, HE ENDEAVORS TO CONVEY THE MESSAGE OF THE
SYNAGOGUE THROUGH WAYS OF DIGNITY AND CONSECRATION, ~~AND IN THE~~
DARKENED WORLD OF APOCALYPTIC TERROR SUCH AS ^{during his rabbinic} OVERTOOK MANKIND,
IN ~~THESE RECENT~~ ^{of war} DESPERATE YEARS, HE SOUGHT TO HOLD ALOFT ~~FOR~~
~~MEN~~ THE UNDIMMED TORCH OF TRUTH AND FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE
WHICH ALONE CAN SUSTAIN THE HOPES OF MAN. RABBI FELDMAN IS THE
STUDENT ALWAYS, ALWAYS THE SEEKER AFTER KNOWLEDGE, ALWAYS
REVERENT OF JEWISH LEARNING. HE KNOWS THAT A PEOPLE PERISHES
FOR WANT OF KNOWLEDGE AND THAT IT IS THE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY
OF THE RABBI TO MAGNIFY THE TORAH, TO EXALT IT, AND TO SPREAD
ITS KNOWLEDGE AMONG MEN.

FROM TIME TO TIME THERE TAKE PLACE SERIOUS DISCUSSIONS,
NOT ONLY AMONG LAYMEN BUT ALSO AMONG RABBIS AS TO WHAT IS
THE REAL FUNCTION OF THE RABBI IN THE MODERN WORLD. SOME PLACE
THE EMPHASIS UPON PREACHING; OTHERS UPON PASTORAL WORK; STILL
OTHERS UPON COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP; AGAIN, THERE ARE THOSE WHO
WOULD LIKE TO HAVE THE RABBI SERVE AS THE TRIBUNE OF HIS PEOPLE
TO THE NON-JEWISH WORLD. MORE RECENTLY THERE HAVE BEEN THOSE
WHO WISH THE RABBI TO BECOME A PSYCHIATRIST, MINISTERING TO THE
SICK AND WOUNDED SOULS AMONG HIS PARISHIONERS. I SUPPOSE THAT
THERE IS CONSIDERABLE MERIT IN EACH ONE OF THESE CONTENTIONS
ALTHOUGH IT IS QUITE DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW ANY ONE MAN CAN COM-
PROMISE THEM ALL IN ONE CAREER. BUT IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED
THAT TRADITIONALLY AMONG OUR PEOPLE THE PRIMARY FUNCTION OF THE
RABBI WAS TO BE ^a ~~THE~~ "TALMID CHACHAM", THE SCHOLAR, WHO TAUGHT

Torah, the teachings
~~AND~~ INTERPRET ~~THE~~ *Law* OF JUDAISM TO HIS PEOPLE. BY
WHATEVER NAMES OUR SPIRITUAL LEADERS WERE KNOWN IN THE LAST
2500 YEARS -- WHETHER AS "SOPHERIM", "CHACHAMIM", "TANNAIM" OR
"AMORAIM", "RABQ~~Q~~INIM" -- THE TERMS ALWAYS SIGNIFIED IN ONE WAY
OR ANOTHER THE TEACHER, THE SCHOOLMAN.

THERE ARE, UNFORTUNATELY, ~~SO MANY~~ *some* IN OUR RABBINIC PRO-
FESSION WHO, HARD-PRESSED AS THEY ARE BY THE URGENCIES OF LIFE
ABOUT THEM AND BY THE IMPACT OF THE DEMANDS OF THE DAY, FORGET
THE TIMELESS IN THE TIMELY, AND LOSE SIGHT OF THIS PREEMINENT
DUTY AND PRIVILEGE OF THE RABBI IN ISRAEL. IT REMINDS ONE OF THE
STUDENTS WHO WERE TAKEN INTO A ROOM BY A TEACHER AND ASKED
TO DESCRIBE ALL THA T THEY SAW. NOT ONE OF THEM MENTIONED THE
LIGHT IN THE ROOM. RABBI FELDMAN NEVER FORGOT THE LIGHT OF
THE TORAH IN THE LIFE OF HIS PEOPLE.

A leader in Reform Judaism says...
HE IS PERSUADED THAT THERE IS A GREAT FUTURE FOR THE
JEW SH COMMUNITY IN THE UNITED STATES, NOW MORE THAN FIVE MILLION
STRONG -- THE GREATEST JEWISH COMMUNITY IN HISTO RY -- IF IT WILL
REMAIN TRUE TO ITS GREAT PAST. AN INDIVIDUAL WHO LOSES HIS MEMORY
IS NO LONGER NORMAL. A PEOPLE WHICH BECOMES COMPLETELY EMANCI-
PATED FROM ITS PAST CULTURE BECOMES LIKEWISE ABNORMAL. WE
REQUIRE OUR GREAT PAST TO NURTURE A GREAT FUTURE. RABBI FELDMAN
FEELS THAT THE SURVIVAL OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN THE UNITED
STATES DEPENDS UPON ITS SCHOOLS AND UPON ~~THE~~ *the* QUALITY OF JEWISH
EDUCATION WHICH WE SHALL GIVE TO THE RISING GENERATION. HE
FURTHERMORE BELIEVES THAT THE VERY MEANING AND DIGNITY OF

*- not the things which divide - not sharp differences
but heighten the debate - even for uniting & unity*

JEWISH LIVING IN THE UNITED STATES DEPENDS UPON OUR BEING ABLE TO PRODUCE ON THESE GRACIOUS SHORES A JEWISH CULTURE ON A SCALE AND QUALITY COMMENSURATE WITH THE SIZE OF OUR COMMUNITY. WE CANNOT BANQUET FOREVER UPON BORROWING. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT REVOLUTION IN HUMAN HISTORY WAS THE TRANSITION FROM FOOD-COLLECTING TO FOOD-PRODUCING. WE MUST BEGIN TO PRODUCE OUR OWN SPIRITUAL AND CULTURAL FOOD IN THIS COUNTRY. WE CANNOT SURVIVE LONG UPON PHILANTHROPY OR EXCLUSIVELY UPON PUBLIC WORSHIP. OUR FOREFATHERS TAUGHT US THE STRATEGY OF SURVIVAL: "THIS BOOK OF THE LAW SHALL NOT DEPART OUT OF THY MOUTH, BUT THOU SHALT MEDITATE THEREIN DAY AND NIGHT...FOR THEN THOU SHALT HAVE GOOD SUCCESS."

RABBI FELDMAN HAS BEEN A ZIONIST SINCE HIS BOYHOOD. HE BELONGED TO THE SAME HEBREW SPEAKING JUNIOR ZIONIST CLUB WHICH WE ORGANIZED IN 1904, SOON AFTER THE DEATH OF DR. THEODOR HERZL. THE NOTED FRENCH PHILOSOPHER, EMILE BOUTROUX, WHOM I HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF KNOWING, WAS ASKED WHAT, IN HIS OPINION, WAS INVOLVED IN THE GOOD LIFE. HE REPLIED: "A GOOD THOUGHT CONCEIVED IN EARLY LIFE AND DEVELOPED IN MATURITY."

FOR DR. FELDMAN, ZIONISM HAS BEEN THAT GOOD THOUGHT WHICH WAS CONCEIVED IN EARLY LIFE AND WHICH WAS DEVELOPED IN MATURITY. ON MANY FRONTS HE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT VALIANTLY AND RESOLUTELY AND HE HAS BEEN PRIVILEGED TO SEE A BLESSED FULFILLMENT OF THE IDEAL OF HIS YOUTH.

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DAY IN OUR JEWISH CALENDAR IS THE SABBATH. IT IS CALLED "HEMDAT YAMIN" -- "MOST BELOVED AND DESIRED OF DAYS!". DR. THEODOR HERZL CALLED ZIONISM THE SABBATH OF HIS LIFE. I AM SURE THAT DR. FELDMAN, IN LOOKING BACK ^{over} ~~UPON~~ THE YEARS SINCE HE WAS FIRST IDENTIFIED WITH THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT, MORE THAN HALF A CENTURY AGO, FEELS THAT THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT HAS BEEN THE SABBATH OF HIS LIFE.

RABBI FELDMAN HAS SERVED NOT ONLY HIS PEOPLE AND HIS FAITH, BUT ALSO HIS BELOVED COUNTRY, HIS STATE AND HIS CITY WITH RARE DISTINCTION. HE LOVES AMERICA. HE UNDERSTANDS ITS TRADITIONS AND THE UNIQUE QUALITIES OF ITS GENIUS. HE IS EAGER FOR THE GREAT ROLE OF LEADERSHIP WHICH AMERICA HAS BEEN SUMMONED BY DESTINY TO ASSUME IN THE WORLD. RABBI FELDMAN HAS BLENDED HIS JEWISH AND HIS ~~AMERICAN~~ AMERICAN LOYALTIES PERFECTLY AND HAS EXEMPLIFIED IN HIS LIFE THE COMPLETE HARMONY AND CONCORDANCE OF THE TWO. HE DID NOT FIND IT NECESSARY TO RECONCILE HIS AMERICANISM AND HIS JUDAISM, AND BOTH OF THEM WITH THE HISTORIC EFFORT TO RECONSTITUTE THE STATE OF ISRAEL, FOR HE AT NO TIME SAW ANY CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THEM. THE FRIGHTENED CLAMOR RAISED BY SOME JEWISH ESCAPISTS ~~for~~ ^{for} INTEGRATION WITHIN THE AMERICAN :SCENE LEAVES HIM COLD AND UNMOVED, FOR HE RIGHTLY SUSPECTS THAT THOSE WHO RAISE THIS CRY ARE INTERESTED NOT IN INTEGRATION BUT IN ASSIMILATION.

MY DEAR FRIEND, WHAT IS PAST IS PROLOGUE! ON THE LOOM OF THE YEARS YOU HAVE WOVEN THE RESPLENDENT CLOTH OF A NOBLE CAREER WHOSE GOLDEN THREADS ARE IDEALS AND SERVICE AND LEARNING, BUT THE WEAVING FORTUNATELY IS STILL TO GO ON, ACCORDING TO THE GRACIOUS PATTERN WHICH YOU HAVE SET. THE RABBIS SAID THAT SCHOLARS, THE OLDER THEY GET, THE MORE PRECIOUS THEIR WISDOM, THE MORE PROFOUND THEIR INSIGHTS, THE GREATER THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO MANKIND.

