



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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Ideal of peace, undated.

Ideal of Peace

Mankind has been divided into many kinds of groups; into noble and social outcasts; into people of superior race and those of inferior race; into whites and blacks; into Christians and pagans; into exploiters and exploited. In my opinion, it is essential for the continued existence of civilization that men shall be classified into those who are desirous of peace and those who desire war. This is not an evaluation of men on a moral basis; it is a classification which bare and simple reason demands. It is a fact that the white-skinned man is more warlike than the black-skinned, and that European civilization, which is younger in years, is more combative and prone to war than is the civilization of India and China, which is older in origin. The wisdom of Asia is more desirous of peace than the shrewdness of Europe, which is greedier for deeds.

We Jews, the oldest among the peoples of Europe which still survive, we Jews, who in the days when we had our own country occupied a position between Europe and Asia, have received from the Occident the spirit of activity and thirst for deeds, and from the Orient, the great doctrine of peace, the longing for blissfulness and inactivity. We Jews, acquainted with the attractions both of war and of peace, equally skilled in the conscientious scruples of the contemplative person and in the lack of conscience of the man of action, we Jews appear to have been called, above all other peoples, to prepare for the ushering in of the period of peace.

It is a good thing to prevent conflicts, or to settle them by means of negotiations. It is a fine thing to create perpetual peace institutions. But it is better, more important, to beget human beings who shall be devoted to the ideal of peace. It is of little effect to

harmonize matters of state and economic affairs, as long as man himself has not been pacified.

In this an overwhelming obligation is imposed upon Judaism more than upon any other spiritual and intellectual group. In the good old days of the Jewish state the mediator and prophet stood side by side with the soldier and the great proclaimer of peace with the great warrior. These were not weak, cowardly sponge-like wailers, who were pining for peace, but men who had experienced war, who had felt in their very hearts the enticements of the sword, men who had finally come to the realization that from the sword which had taken human life the blood could not be washed away with a laurel wreath.

It has been shown that the most energetic proclaimers and fosterers of peace are those who have experienced war at the very front. It has been shown that these are the ones who proclaim peace most effectively. If today most of the soldiers who fought at the front are announcers of peace, then we may say with a grain of salt, that the majority of the Jews, by reason of their descent and birth are human beings who have experienced war - and have conquered it.

Israel conceives of its God under the likeness of the still, small voice. For thousands of years its salutation has been: "Peace be with you." God is not in the thunder, God is not in the great tempest, but God is in the still, small voice. But this still, small voice becomes perceptible only for the reason that the thunder and the storm have preceded it.. Because the Jew has experienced war and storm, he knows what peace is. Because he has experienced war and storm, it remains his most urgent task, his most keenly desired goal, to see to it that there shall be fulfilled the greeting which he has used throughout the centuries, "Peace be with you."