



Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

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Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York, correspondence,
invitation, and speech, 1970.

CONGREGATION EMANU-EL
OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
FIFTH AVENUE AT SIXTY-FIFTH STREET
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10021

1 E 65th St.

FORMED BY THE CONSOLIDATION
OF EMANU-EL CONGREGATION
AND TEMPLE BETH-EL

OFFICE OF
REV. DR. NATHAN A. PERILMAN

January 12, 1970

Dear Dan:

I can't tell you how delighted I am that you are coming to us on April 11th for our 125th anniversary Service. I know you will give distinction to the happy occasion.

We are having a simple Sabbath morning Service conducted by the Rabbis of the Congregation and the Anniversary Service addressed by yourself. About thirty minutes will be fine. I shall introduce you briefly.

Following the Service there is to be a luncheon at the Hotel Pierre, which I hope you will be able to stay for. We are going to have a minimum of speech making - a few greetings from some neighbors.

If I can be of any help in making hotel arrangements for you please let me know. We will, of course, be delighted if your wife can accompany you.

With warmest thanks for your ready acceptance of our invitation, and with all good wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Nathan

Dr. Daniel J. Silver
The Temple
University Circle & Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

NAP/r

January 15, 1970

**Dr. Nathan A. Perilman
Congregation Emanu-El
of the City of New York
Fifth Avenue at 65th Street
New York, New York 10021**

Dear Dr. Perilman:

**This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter of January 12th.
Rabbi Silver is out of the country until the end of this month. I
am sure he will be in communication with you upon his return.**

Sincerely,

MGM:mm

**(Miss)Margurite G. Mihok
Secretary to Rabbi Silver**

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REV. DR. NATHAN A. PERILMAN

February 19, 1970

Dear Daniel:

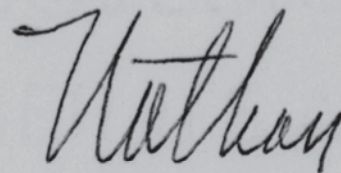
I am enclosing a copy of the invitation to our 125th Anniversary Service. The time draws nigh.

Will you please send me a photograph of yourself and such biographical items as you want me to include in our Temple Bulletin notice. It takes several weeks to get the photograph prepared for printing. Will you, therefore, ask your secretary to send it on.

I hope that you enjoyed your trip to India. I was there thirteen years ago and learned a great deal during my three-week stay. One can hardly know the world without seeing India.

Looking forward to your visit, I am with all good wishes

Sincerely yours,



Rev. Dr. Daniel J. Silver
The Temple
University Circle & Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

NAP/r

P.S. Will you want us to arrange hotel accommodations for you?

February 24, 1970

Rabbi Nathan A. Perilman
Congregation Emanu-El
Fifth Avenue at Sixty-fifth Street
New York, New York 10021

Dear Nathan:

I am looking forward to being with you on Saturday, the 11th of April. I do not know my travel schedule yet. I must be in Cleveland Friday night. We have Werblowsky speaking. I may come in very late Friday night or very early the next morning. By the way, do I bring a robe, my frock, or what?

As for the biography, you might say simply that I am President of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, President of the Cleveland Zionist Council, Chairman of the Israeli Task Force of the Cleveland Jewish Community Federation, Editor of the CCAR Journal and Adjunct Professor of Religion at Case Western Reserve University.

It was an exciting trip and sometimes when we have a chance I would like to sit down and compare notes.

Sincerely,

DJS:rvf:mgm

Daniel Jeremy Silver

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Getting Ready For a new age!

March 6, 1970

Dear Daniel:

Thanks for your letter of February 24. I do not think you will need a robe. You are not so much bigger than I am that you can't wear one of mine with comfort.

Will you want to announce a theme for your address, or shall we just call it the 125th anniversary address?

Nothing else occurs to me at the moment. If it does, I will bother you some more.

With all good wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Nathan

Dr. Daniel J. Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

NAP/r

March 11, 1970

Dr. Nathan A. Perilman
Congregation Emanu-El
of the City of New York
Fifth Avenue at Sixty-Fifth Street
New York, New York 10021

Dear Nate:

Let's just call it "The 125th Anniversary
Address." It is as open-ended as you can get.

I look forward to being with you. With
all good wishes, I remain,

Sincerely,

DJS:mgm

Daniel Jeremy Silver

*The Officers, Trustees and Rabbis
of*

*Congregation Emanu-El
of the City of New York*

cordially invite you to join in celebrating the

125th Anniversary of the Congregation

by your attendance at a Sabbath Service

Saturday, April 11, 1970

at 10:30 a.m.

Anniversary Guest Preacher

Rev. Dr. Daniel Jeremy Silver

The Temple, Cleveland, Ohio

*A Special Service of Emanu-El favorite music
will be offered by the Temple Choir*

April 15, 1970

Dr. Nathan A. Perilman
Congregation Emanu-El
of the City of New York
Fifth Avenue at Sixty-fifth Street
New York, New York 10021

Dear Nate:

I want to tell you again how much I enjoyed my visit. It was an exciting day for Emanu-El and for me and one which I will happily remember. Sorry I could not remain for the remainder of the lunch but as it was, I just made my flight.

I am happy to edit the text of the tape of my lecture for you.

My expenses to New York were \$120.00.

See you soon. With all good wishes, I remain

Sincerely,

Daniel Jeremy Silver

DJS:bfm

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OFFICE OF
REV. DR. NATHAN A. PERILMAN

April 23, 1970

Dear Dan:

Enclosed is our check
covering your expenses to New York.

Looking forward to seeing
you soon, I am with all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

Nathan

Dr. Daniel Jeremy Silver
The Temple
University Circle at Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

NAP/rc
enc.

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OFFICE OF
REV. DR. NATHAN A. PERILMAN

August 18, 1970

Dear Dan:

We are going to press with our 125th Anniversary Volume and our publishers require a release for publication. Will you please sign the enclosed form. This does not mean that you may not print the sermon for any other purpose.

I hope that you have had a pleasant summer.

With all good wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

Nathan A. Perilman

Dr. Daniel J. Silver
The Temple
University Circle & Silver Park
Cleveland, Ohio 44106

NAP/r
enc.

In return for One Dollar (\$1.00) and other valuable considerations, I, Rev. Dr. Daniel J. Silver, hereby grant and assign to Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York all publication rights to the address to be given by me on April 11, 1970 at the celebration of the 125th Anniversary of the Congregation, specifically the right to include such an address in a volume to be published under the auspices of Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York, and the right to copyright my address, in its name as owner.

Congregation Emanu-El of the City of New York agrees to protect the copyright of my address under the general copyright of the volume to be published by it.

Dated: August , 1970



Rabbi Perilman and dear friends -

It is a privilege and pleasure for me to be here as part of this 125th anniversary celebration of Temple Emanu-El. I confess, however, that I am not quite certain as to what my role should be. Certainly you did not invite me to rehearse Emanu-El's chronicle of achievement. These are your achievements. You wrote this history. You have for long been the largest congregation in the largest Jewish community in the world. Your buildings have been landmarks in this city. Your leadership and your membership have been active in all that has made for the progress and prosperity of New York.

Perhaps the success of Emanu-El suggests something of what I ought to say. There are always those who feel that simply by affiliating with a premier congregation they are among the faithful and have assured themselves of a first rate faith. Faith cannot be had simply by enrolling oneself in a Temple register. Faith can not be had by delegating the responsibilities and activities of religious life to an institution, however significant that institution may be. Faith must be won, it must be searched for, it must be wrestled with. Faith is an active undertaking.

Before coming, I went back and read a bit of the history of Emanu-El and discovered that some fifty years ago at a celebration much as this one, your then Rabbi Enelow chose to speak these words:

The most serious problem today lies in vicarious Judaism. All too large is the number of those who are content with passive membership in the community and in its organizations. The actual conduct of religious life they leave to others, but no religious life can flourish by delegation. The Jew has never believed in vicariousness in matters of faith.

In his day and in ours there are Jews who practice vicariousness in matters of faith. "I belong. I pay my assessments. My children go to the religious school. My daughter's marriage was solemnized by the rabbi. I attend occasionally on the High Holidays - that's it, isn't it?" Of course, that's precisely not it!

Whatever else our age is or is not, it is a convulsed age - an age of confusing change. Our times force us to ask ourselves again and again; what is demanded of me and by whom? Old assumptions are no longer taken for granted. Is there a new morality? What are the new moralities? What is the way that I should go? What are the standards by which I should abide? How can I achieve significantly? How can I find peace of mind and happiness? Never has an age had so much; so much opportunity, so much freedom, so many nervous breakdowns, so many young people walking around with dead, sullen faces. We are confused, we need desperately the balanced theological understandings of Jewish thought and the high moral reach of Jewish ethic. For many, Judaism and life pass each other by because they have confused the institution with that which takes place within the institution, the envelope with the substance of the letter. He wore an open shirt, he had beads around his neck, he was unshod, he spoke with a smile, and in a deliberately soft voice and he said to me, "You know, I'm not the one who dropped out, but my parents have. ~~They~~ live for things. They live to see and to be seen. They say what everybody else is saying. They read what everybody else is reading. They go to synagogue when everybody else gets dressed up. It is not that they don't know, it is that they no longer care to ask the questions."

Never in scripture is it said: 'join a congregation and gain faith.' Again and again it is said Darshu-ni Veyihyu "Seek ye Me, and live." Faith begins in personal search. We are called the children of Israel. Why? Israel is Jacob's second name, the name Jacob earned after he had wrestled the long night with the angel, with his conscience, with the sunshine and the shadows, with his love and his fears, with his hopes and his tribulations, and had not been overcome. Faith is to expose oneself to life, to all the uncertainties, to all the incongruities, to all the confusion, to the maddening throng, to others, and not quail, faith ^{is} to dare to live, to be receptive to life. If we are truly sons of Emanu-El, Emanu-El - God is with us, then we have to be willing to let God in, and we will not find God simply by occasionally walking in these doors. We must walk in these doors with a certain receptivity. We must be willing to bare the quick flesh of our souls, to be hurt by life, to care for another human being, to dare for a cause, if need be, to change the pattern of our lives. Only as we touch others can we touch God. Where is God? God, as the Hasid said, is wherever man lets Him in.

So far I have offered an appropriate, typical anniversary sermon; thoughts which ought to be said and are often said on such occasions as this, but I submit that such thoughts are only part of the proper and necessary meaning of this morning.

Another question must be faced. Simply put it is this: What happens when someone walks in these doors and says, 'I am willing, I do care, I want to understand. I need to know. Help me?' How supportive, how enlightening, how responsive, how effective are our religious institutions?

I am afraid that when we look at our institutions, if we use an anniversary to look back and look ahead, we will be forced to admit that much of what we do in this congregation, in any congregation, must be categorized under such titles

as the spinning of wheels or familiar but purely formal routine, what we do simply because it always has been done, words which have been spoken because they were once appropriate, not necessarily because they touch another soul.

When I wondered how I might develop this point for you, I reminded myself that I had in my library a book, a prayerbook, your prayerbook, an Order of Prayer for Divine Service written by and for this congregation by your first rabbi, Leo Merzbacher. I need hardly remind you that Emanu-El came into being out of "Culture Verein," a small group of men who banded together "To create such a service that shall arouse and quicken devotion and thus uplift the heart of God." They wanted a living, vibrant faith. They wanted Judaism to speak to them effectively, in the language of their day. Out of that need came this book of worship. It is a fine, beautiful book. It is good to hold. More than this, it offers what was certainly for its day an effective and harmonious service, and one which was among the significant creations in early reform liturgy.

But what has this book to do with the question of priority and purpose in congregational life? Simply this. Rabbi Merzbacher had the good sense to preface his order, his liturgy with an explanation of the text. Why he had made certain selections. Why certain paragraphs had been excised. Why the prayers were arranged as they were arranged. I often wish our Union Prayerbook contained such an explanation which we might mull over in the quiet of the pre-worship moments. In any case, after addressing a few words to those who would pick up this book when they came to worship, he

addressed a few words to the religious establishment of his day, those whom he felt would pick up this book and be put off and displeased by the changes which he had suggested.

Lay aside this Prayerbook with a smile, if you please, or with scorn, if you choose... be only kind enough to give us some credit for sincerity... Howsoever different, these ideas may be from yours, and our ways from your ways, be reminded of the saying of the sages Kol Mahloket she -hi Leshem Shamayim Sofah lehitkayem. 'Every discord which has a holy purpose tends to the end to a consolation.'

In the event the reforms of his service became familiar. The Jewish community adjusted to liturgical variety and, with acceptance, the religious rebels of yesterday become the religious establishment of our day. I wonder if we accord our critics the same credit for sincerity which Rabbi Merzbacher pleaded for a hundred and more years ago; for there is criticism, all is not right in the household of religion. The votes are being taken, people are voting with their feet and by their votes they are saying; what you do is not so much in error as irrelevant. We do not take exception to your activities but there's no bite in them, they do not touch us, Judaism is bland, it is not alive. The young do not even bother to demonstrate against us. I suspect that what we must do on an anniversary is to ask ourselves again some fundamental questions. Why does a synagogue exist? Why does my congregation exist? And then ask ourselves, "How well do our programs and activities achieve these ends?"

Why does a congregation exist? I would suggest that a congregation exists for a single purpose, and that is to encourage the man, the woman, the young person to seek the ultimate religious achievement - Kedusha - holiness, ^{AND} to guide and support him on that way. Holiness is the supreme religious virtue Kedoshim Ti-hyu Ki Kadosh Ani Adonai Elohehem

"Holy thou shalt be for I, the Lord, your God, am holy." And what is holiness? We Jews have always had a particular and special definition of holiness. Holiness is not ritual exuberance. Holiness is not fasting, midnight vigils, endless lacerations, bloody flagellations, exhibitionist piety. Holiness is a particular way of life, moral self-discipline, devotion in act to that wisdom which separates the trivial and the tinsel from the significant, a way of life which is sanctified and concerned, sensitive to human values, in which every human being is sacred.

Throughout the community of Israel these weeks, we are reading from the Book of Leviticus. The Book of Leviticus is essentially one, long definition of Kedusha, holiness. How is one to become holy? By not bearing a grudge, by taking up a stumbling block from before the blind, by dealing openly and honestly with one's neighbor, by honoring one's parent, by fearing God. That is the way of holiness, and that is the way a congregation exists to encourage. Why do we have worship - daily worship, weekly worship? So that we may breathe an hour a day, a few hours a week, the atmosphere of Kedusha, good clean spiritual air, so that we may enter again and again a symbolic environment which will underscore the gap between holiness and the ordinary, the vulgar, and the humdrum. Why do we have learning in a congregation? So that we can take the basic ageless disciplines and relate them effectively to the complex decisions of our lives. And why is there congregation? Because we can not do it alone, because we need help, because we need to meet, to touch, and to learn how to cooperate with each other. That is what a congregation is all about. Are we effectively promoting Kedusha or do we turn off the young and the middle-aged and the older who come searching? Do we present the shadow or the substance, platitudes or the living word,

empty forms or meaningful participant ritual, theoretical talk or the experience of belonging to an historic people?

Reform Judaism, dear friends, came into being in order to make our faith vital, significant. Those who cared nothing about Judaism walked away. Those who cared deeply for Judaism sought to renew it. They took a Judaism that had become lush and ritually overgrown during the enforced parochial experience of the Middle Ages and tried to cut away the underbrush so that one could walk freely about and see clearly the outline of the tall majestic trees - the central affirmations, ~~Our faith~~. Our faith had become community bound. We need to learn to live with others. Judaism was tied to premodern aesthetics and attitudes. We needed to draw on new standards of beauty and from the teaching and the wisdom of the new sciences. We sought to create a way of life which would be understandable to the citizen of the 19th century, and since that age was optimistic, confident of man, individualistic, reformist, respectable, our congregations were molded in that image.

I would suggest that we have come to that point in our history where we need a reform of reform, for what we did then is now no longer that vital. That Reform spoke to a particular need which is no longer our need, to a particular Jew who is no longer our congregant. That age was bourgeois - good and solid, full of good and solid middle class virtues. It was respectable and community minded. It knew not Auschwitz, Hiroshima or Watts. We live in darker days, our lives are far more shadowed, our needs are far more urgent. Our world is convulsed. We have lost confidence in progress. Optimism has been drained from us. We wonder whether civilization, man, can survive. People want something more than sweet reasonableness from the pulpit. They want something more than simple dignity from worship. They

need to touch other lives, not to worship next to strangers. They want to feel, they want a living faith, a faith that encourages, engages life, ennobles.

All over our country there are tens of hundreds of young Jews who are taking courses in oriental mysticism. Why? Because familiar worship patterns, our worship, does not satisfy their spiritual needs. They want something more intense, something in which they can be more involved, in which there is more movement, more highlight, more depth. All around our country there are hundreds of young and middle-aged Jews who suffer for every injustice save those done to their people; why? Because Judaism has been to them a matter of words on a Saturday morning not a life style nor a mission. All around our country there are many among the middle-aged and elderly who rarely walk into the synagogue because they find that it no longer is^{as} meaningful as it once was. Words are spoken, familiar words. Rites are celebrated, familiar rites, but they have changed and somehow the synagogue has not changed with them. We speak in terms and in forms beloved and familiar a generation ago, but we do not speak with the idiom of the contemporary nor with the forms of today.

Dear Friends, the Union Prayerbook was not given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, There is no rule that worship must be carried out ever and always with a grand cathedral organ and a robed choir in the way in which it was orchestrated these past decades. Aaron did not submit to the tribes of Israel a religious school curriculum which had to be held fast to from then and forever. Miriam was never President of a sisterhood. What we did was good and valid a generation ago. I am suggesting that now we must do other things in other ways; find more effective ways to transmit the ancient insights, the teaching and the

understanding. These insights have not been outmoded. Never have they been more needed. It is simply that we are different. We speak a different language, we dance to different tunes, we sing different melodies. Can we truly say that our synagogues sing our melodies, speak our language, dance to our tune, answer our questions, sometimes? always?

All over our land one thing is clear. There is a desperate search. We are part of it. We are frustrated, bitter. We are confused. What must I do? How shall I live? What are the proper and functional standards of family life? What represents truth? How do I go about effecting social change? How do I go about changing myself? How do I learn to live with other human beings, to touch them, not simply use them; to be part of a community, not partner to a society which manipulates and abuses people?

The synagogue, this synagogue, has much to teach and has men who can teach. What is needed is a willingness to break out of the old modes, break the kelipah, the hardened shell, go about our business untrammelled by the conventions of the past so that the voice of the past can again be heard.

What I am saying to you is not simply another pop culture plea to be "with it." Let me quote to you from one of your own rabbis, Samuel Goldenson, from a speech he made thirty-five years ago.

Our energies, therefore, should be engaged in strengthening and reinforcing every wall and every pillar of our religious structure... We must bring the sustaining and life-giving nourishment to them directly, with such zeal and enthusiasm, with such force and consecration that they will be drawn to us.

In a word the problem is for us to re-assert and re-affirm spiritual content not by word of mouth merely, but by example, an example that shall emanate from genuine feeling and a heartfelt appreciation of their pertinence and sublimity.

As there are some who are leaving the synagogue because we failed to stress the personal and the mystic sides of our faith, so there are others who have become indifferent to the religion of their fathers because their grievances and resentments against a world in which brute inequality and selfish materialism reign are not sufficiently voiced. We can draw them back only by assuming once more the role of the prophets in Israel and preach the simply and unmistakable yet elemental doctrine "Not by might nor by power does man prevail but by the spirit of God." Our message, therefore, should be social and communal, as well as personal and mystic to the end that "righteousness shall flow as water and justice is a mighty stream.

I have suggested ^{that} over the years that our congregations ^{have} become one dimensional. We have spoken with mild tones to the middle-aged about middle class values. We must become multi-dimensional; speak to the street urchin, to the rebellious youngster, to the confused young person, to those beginning a family, worrying through the problems of love, to the middle-aged and the aging, each in his own language, each in terms appropriate to their needs and to their understanding. We have the teaching, we have the wisdom, we have the resource. What we lack are appropriate forms and idioms and we suffer from being hidebound. You have to help us in finding the ways. You have to encourage us to break out of the familiar routines into new avenues of religious undertaking. You have to encourage us by coming, by searching, by seeking, because no institution can remake your faith and give you new strength unless you are willing to come, to be part of its life, of its worship, of its liturgy, of its learning. You have a proud and noble record, a history second to none. You understand the imperatives of learning and of love of God, of Israel, and of mankind. You have the resources of person and profession. You stand on the threshold of a potently great era of service. Walk into it with fresh eyes, clear minds,

burdened by concern but not by the past.

May the Lord establish the work of your hands, yea the work of your hands may He establish it.

AMEN

