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When to Take Chances, a Purim Sermon; How to Be a Man of  
Leisure, 1962.



## WHEN TO TAKE CHANCES

## A Purim Sermon

The Temple  
March 18, 1962

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

We are, all of us, familiar with Hamlet's moving soliloquy, "To be or not to be, that is the question." The melancholy prince's anguish is movingly told -- whether he must suffer life's indignity, or whether it would be better for him to speed its hasty conclusion.

"To be or not to be, that is the question" -- or is it? Most of us, fortunately, lack Hamlet's brooding depression. Life is our natural habitat. It is all that we have. Although it might be more to our cut of cloth, it is not altogether unwelcome. We find sunlight, excitement, and love, and fulfillment despite the gray hours and the occasional bruise. We are in no hurry to summon the Angel of Death. 'To live or not to live' is not the crucial human question, but 'how to live' is. Life is bearable, if not an adventure, but life is also confusing. We need guidance. We need counsel. We need a road map and a set of landmarks by which to set our sights. For life is not a prefabricated item which comes to us carefully engineered and calibrated from the production line. It is uncut lumber, and unlaid brick, and we are the contractors of our own destiny. Life is not made for us; we make our lives for ourselves.

The ancient Chinese delighted to figure life as a seed. If the seed is carefully planted, fertilized, raked, irrigated, pruned, it ripens into sound fruit. But if it is carelessly tossed out and indifferently tended, the seed withers in the ground, and the sprout never matures into the



harvest. It is not the seed but the farmer that insures the harvest, and we are the farmers of our own lives. Life is opportunity. "Oh, no. I protest. God short-changed me," so the complaint of the latest applicant for admission to the heavenly tribunal. "I never had a chance. Some have opportunity; I had none. I was born in a drafty, dirty, one-room log cabin. My parents were semiliterate, often liquored. My father deserted my mother at an early age. I was put out early to a man's chores, and I had little time for schooling, for book learning, and for an education. My friends were like me, ruffians and toughs. We were physical. We were not trained to use our minds. We had little chance and little interest. How could I have become other than that which I did become?" The Archangel did not answer, rather he turned to the court attendant and ordered him to summon President Lincoln to sit in judgment on this applicant.

How easy it is to invent excuses for our own failings and for our own foibles. They pour out, these rationalizations of ours. We blame God. We lay our complaint to the times, to our physical soundness or ill health, to the color of our skin, to our birth religion, to our social class, to the times, to our genes. It matters not. A hundred excuses are ready at hand. But are these excuses justified? No one in our century could lay greater complaint against the fates, perhaps, than Prince Lithuli. If he had been born a half century ago into his home and into his house, he would have been master of half a continent, for the Bantus of which his family were sovereign ruled most of the southern part of Africa. Instead, he was born into a nation whose walls of apartheid reached to the heavens. Not only has he been stripped of his power, of his glory, of the badge and the reality of office, but he cannot even move about freely in his own country, much less vote or enjoy any civil rights. He lives in a back-water country reservation, in a



wattle hut, impoverished, and yet his name will be long remembered when those of his emperor-ancestors have already been forgotten. Indeed, he was awarded this year, as an example of human nobility and of human brotherhood and compassion, the Nobel Peace Prize.

How many have turned disadvantage into advantage, disability into strength. The jurist and the thief can be raised in a single tenement block. Illness can unbalance the emotion of one and bring out the Helen Keller in another. Life's opportunity is not equally distributed, but life can always be used to advantage if we have the will, if we have ourselves in hand. Before we chronicle our complaint to the heavens, let us be honestly sure of this, that we have not frittered away our energies, that we have not dissipated our vigor, that we have not, instead of burning the midnight oil, burned the candle at both ends.

If we have ourselves completely in hand, if we have taken the decisions that need to be taken, if we have mastered the discipline that needs to be mastered, if we have been controlled, then perhaps our excuse is justified. But who among us has been that strong?

Why not? Why not? A contemporary philosopher was once asked what is the rarest of all human traits, and he answered without hesitation, "Decisiveness." And what is the most ordinary of human traits? "Self indulgence." And how true this is. It is not that we do not know what we must do. It is not that our reason confounds us, but that we lack the will to carry our plans into programs of life. We know what needs to be done, but we simply lack the courage to do it.

Let me place before you some echoes from the desk in my office, echoes of a young man, tired of his daily employment, worried by the lack of happiness and challenge it presents to him, concerned with the lack of



scruple of this particular business, chagrined that he must proselytize what he considers to be his standards to the marketplace, who yet tells me, "I have known this. I have known of my concern for these many months. Yet each morning I put on my tie and my coat, and I leave my letter of resignation locked in the desk at home." What of the young lady who five years ago first came into my office and chronicled a marriage which was a tragic mistake emotionally, physically, and socially. Just this past month she received her divorce decree, and in the intervening five years she has had three children. "We know," another tells me, "that we are living beyond our means. We know that we require a less high-voltage neighborhood. Our bankbook tells us that this is so. The increasing brittleness of our conversation, the tension which is beginning to permeate the atmosphere of our home tells us that this is so. And yet day follows day in endless succession, and we temporize." How many of us can say that we are not mirrored in these echoes, that we, too, have not avoided making decisions, that we, too, have not indulged our love of routine, our innate conservatism, that we, too, have not had ourselves completely under the thumb of our will.

Why not? Why can man not simply will what he knows is right to do? Because we are creatures of habit. Because we are emotionally secure in routine. Because our animal nature is not only somewhat repelled by and confused by, but awkward in the unknown, the future. We prepared our astronauts, these men of great courage, for their orbital flight by simulating on earth every possible change of pressure which could affect them. Our science can extrapolate from the known to the unknown with a great degree of accuracy. And it needed to do so in this case, for whatever the innate courage of these men, had they not known physically what to expect they might have been paralyzed by fear. But the human sciences lack



that predictability, that reliability. We cannot push aside the mist which veils the future. Men must confront the future head-on, accept it as the unknown, and to do so requires of us prodigious strength, character, and will.

Where will we find this strength? The Cowardly Lion in the Wizard of Oz expected that Merlin, by mumbling some magic incantation, could make him a present of courage. And there are some of us who go to a variety of cultic preachers -- the Norman Vincent Peales of our day -- and expect that by mumbling a few incantations we will be given courage. There is a certain potency to self-hypnosis, but it cannot take us very far. The only place you and I will find courage is within ourselves, in the depths of our own personality, and fortunately there is courage abundant imprisoned within our own bodies.

Our tradition images man as created in the image of God. Now what does this mean? Does it mean that God has a head, and arms and legs? Not at all. Rather that we have within us something of the pulsating, dynamic power of creation, that there are reserves of strength untapped within the human resource, that there are no "little men," only men and women who make little use of that which is within.

"Oh, but," you say, "all well and good. It is good to have a philosophy and a psychology of human potential. But words are vague things, tissue-thin. I cannot simply say to myself over and over again 'I am a man. I am a man. I will be strong. I will be strong,' and be a man and be strong." True. But we ought not at the same time be crippled by philosophies and psychologies of despair. And there are many of these abroad in this world. One cannot win a battle if one is afraid to join the battle. One cannot succeed in life if one presumes at the beginning of life that he is a hollow, fragile, brittle



creature, who will crumble as does a vessel of clay the first time that he is shattered against the earth. Let us at least know ourselves to have this strength, attempt, and dare.

What will give us the strength, the ability to mine the reserves of will within ourselves? Determination. The very same qualities which allow the miner to exploit the rich lodes of minerals deep within the bosom of the earth -- blood, will, tears, physical energy, struggle, a wrestling with the elements about him. Now, we do not normally like to think of our existence in terms of struggle and of battle, of blood and of tears. Purim is perhaps a good time -- Purim, the masquerade season of our calendar -- perhaps the appropriate time to remind us how we mask the reality of life from ourselves. Life is not a succession of sunlit Saturday Evening Post covers. Life is not a neat home in a well manicured setting in a well policed suburb. Life is raw, naked energy. Life is powerful potential, potential which requires great skill and great strength and great courage to be harnessed. Life is unpredictable. There is no real security in life. We can occasionally take a vacation from its labor. If we wish a symbol of man confronting his day, let us think of the child perched at the end of a diving board looking down a seemingly infinite distance to the water beneath. His friends have dived. One sees the fear in his eye. "I want to. I must. I can't. I'll be hurt. I'm afraid." In life again and again we teeter at the end of the diving board. And if we wish to plunge in and to swim, to make progress, we must screw up our courage, wrestle with that bundle of fears which is within, master these. Otherwise we will be paralyzed and turn in tears for our mothers.

Life is a struggle with ourselves. The English poet Percy Bysshe Shelley described to a biographer friend a recurrent dream. He was a young



man, standing on the border of life, burning with ambition. A thousand potential activities raced within his mind. He would be a business man. He would be an author. He would be a painter. But every time he attempted one of these ambitions a stranger appeared to frustrate him. He would write a novel. The stranger would come and set a match to the paper. He would paint a picture. The stranger would hurl buckets of color at the canvas. He would open a shop. The stranger drove the customers away from the door. Finally, Shelley gave up his ambitions. A little later in his dream a winsome lass enters, and Shelley is head over heels in love. He courts her, he asks her hand in marriage, and he is accepted, and surprisingly, during this whole romantic idyll the stranger is absent. Marriage day. The ceremony. Two happy young people present themselves at the altar to the minister. "Does anyone know cause why these two should not be joined in the bonds of holy matrimony?" "I do." The voice is the voice of the stranger, and the groom, Shelley, is so angered, filled with wrath, that he rushes at the stranger and pulls the mask off of his face. And whom does he see? His own exact likeness. Each of us has within ourselves an alter-ego, a familiar stranger, the man who says, "Don't mail the letter you have written." "Don't offer to your employer the criticism that is on the tip of your tongue." "Don't speak to your child the counsel which you know needs to be spoken." "Don't make the change that you know needs to be taken."

Each of us has such a stranger. How can we cut him out from our lives? Can he be erased? Unfortunately, no. Can he be excised by surgery? Unfortunately there is no medicine potent against him. Occasionally we can drown out his presence by alcohol, but that is only temporary. How can we be free of this stranger? I place before you the story of Jacob from our Bible. Jacob, you will recall, as a young man was a scheming, conniving,



difficult youth. With his mother he managed to do his brother out of his legitimate birthright. We would not have liked our ancestor Jacob in his early teens, but having gotten the inheritance, the birthright, Jacob flees, fearing the muscle of Esau. Years pass. Experience, the hard, bitter experience of life, teaches Jacob the importance not only of virtue but of family ties. He determines to come back, to return, to be reunited if possible with his brother. He sends him a message to this effect. The message is received but there is no answer. He determines to take his family back to Canaan and to be reunited. To placate his brother, he sends ahead a caravan with rich presents. These are received, but no answer is sent. Fear begins to gnaw at the vitals of Jacob. He divides his flock into half and sends half of all that he owns ahead to his brother; perhaps this will pacify him. The flock is received and there is no answer. Finally, the Bible shows us Jacob on the last night before reconciliation. Only a river, the Jabok, separates Jacob and Esau. The question remains will Jacob be reunited with his family or be beaten to a bloody pulp by his angry brother. During that night a man comes to Jacob in his aloneness and wrestles with him throughout the night. And who is that man but the stranger, the familiar stranger within each of us, the bundle of his fears, the bundle of his guilts, the echo of his self concern. Jacob triumphed. He crossed the ford. He was reunited.

We can triumph. We can triumph because within our own inner being there is strength sufficient to whatever the challenge. You doubt this? True, I cannot draw down for you an anatomical chart to show you the specific gland which secretes courage, but I lay before you the whole skein of human history, a thousand thousand thousand daily evidences of human courage. I ask you only to examine your own homes and your own families. Can you not



find there a living example of great courage, unexpected courage -- the widow suddenly blossoming into her strength, the paralyzed suddenly burning with a new determination, those who had been beaten by life suddenly drawing a new strength and attempting again. Need we be more specific? We have seen it in ourselves. We have been hurt, and we have not cried. We have been beaten, and we have returned to the fray. We have loved and lost, and been willing to love again. There is within each of us a reservoir of courage if we only have the will to exploit it.

The Chinese have a proverb to the effect that in the long and hazardous journey between Peking and Chungking, their two ancient capitals, a journey of many miles which in the ancient days was done at the peril of one's life because of the brigands and the robbers who infested the road, that of all these many miles the most difficult step of all was the first step, the step which starts it all, which sets us on our way.

This is Purim. On Purim we remind ourselves of the Book of Esther. Why so? Because there is high drama, human, universal drama in this book. Esther is Queen of Persia, a vast world empire stretching from India to Ethiopia, throughout the whole known world. She is secure in her rank and her beauty and her privilege. But a certain Haman, for reasons best known to himself, determines against the Jew, and as Prime Minister of the King secures his seal on a writ of genocide. And suddenly Esther, who has thought of nothing more than of her beauty and of her coiffure and of her looks, suddenly is faced with one of those crossroads of decision. The fate of her people is on her shoulders. Only she can crave audience. Only she can make effective petition. If she does, of course, she throws in her lot with her own people, because till this time the king is unaware of her birth or of her nation. But there is a greater danger even than this, for no one may enter the audience chamber



of this emperor-god unannounced, unsummoned. And Esther has not been summoned these many days. If one enters unbidden it is at the cost of his head, unless the king in a sudden fit of generosity raises his sceptre as a sign of welcome. Shall she procrastinate, hoping that the king will summon her? She has not long, only a month before the edict of death is to be effected against the Jew. Shall she take the first step across the threshold of the throne room? If she does she may not even have the opportunity to lay her complaint before the king. The Bible tells us that Esther wrestled with the stranger within her for three days and three nights, till she prevailed. Here a giddy, clothes-conscious woman grows in a three day period into a woman of valor, substance, dedication.

I cannot promise you that effecting your will power can be done easily or without cost. I can promise you, as the holiday of Purim reminds you, that you have within you the capacity to pay the freight, to make decision, whatever it need be, and to make it effective.



## HOW TO BE A MAN OF LEISURE

The Temple  
April 8, 1962

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

This week I am to address a convention of national professionals in the fields of physical education, health and recreation. One may well ask, as I originally asked myself: "Why do we need specialists in these areas?" Isn't this what the old song said: "Doing What Comes Naturally"? Unfortunately, when we do that which comes naturally, we abuse and misuse, we waste, we fritter away much of the free time, the leisure time which is ours. It is unfortunate but true that one of the stereotypes which personifies leisure in our country is that of an unbelted, bloused figure, staring intently at a television set in a cigaretted room darkened against the sunshine.

Doing what comes naturally may be unhealthy, it may lead to flabbiness and illness, and it certainly, in more cases than not, turns our minds and hands away from things which require skill, which are exciting, and allows us to concentrate our actions and our vigor on that which is simply make-work, busy-work, doing things to tire ourselves sufficiently that we may sleep that night.

A visitor to our shores put it to me this way: "I find nothing so frightening as watching you Americans trying to have good times. You're so damnably grim and determined about it." "I was invited recently," he said, "to a weekend with some business associates. I was railroaded from



the city, autoed from the station, whisked through my hellos, told I had five minutes to shave and shower and before I had a chance to catch my breath, I found myself planted before a cheese-dip, glass in hand, and I was told to stand there for several hours before the meal came, a meal which came too late, and at which I over-ate, and after which I failed to sleep all night. At 2:00 A.M., when we finally came home, I was given my marching orders for the next day: Breakfast will be at 8:30, we leave for the Country Club at 9:00; golf is at 10:03 -- imagine golf on a split-minute schedule. After golf a drink, cards, we return home, six minutes for a shower and then the eternal cheese-dip, cocktail hour, and overly laden dinner." He said to me: "I wonder if you Americans rest Monday morning in the office, or Saturdays at home." And, you know, I couldn't answer.

I thought, as he spoke, of that wonderful cartoon which appeared recently of the middle-aged American couple, cameras dangling, who were rushing past the guard at the entrance of the Louvre Museum in Paris -- "Quick, where is the Mona Lisa, we told the taxi to wait." And I thought of all those patient fathers who would take their two weeks of leisure this summer and chauffeur their families across the continent so that three pre-school youngsters could enjoy the Seattle World's Fair. He will drive nine of their fourteen days -- six hundred miles a day -- and will work harder than a truck driver and call this a vacation.

There is obviously something unbalanced in many of our attitudes toward our free time. A recent poll of High School sophomores showed that less than one-tenth read a single book that is unassigned over the entire length of the long summer vacation. We have an increasing problem of middle-aged suburban matrons whose children have come into the upper reaches



of the schools and who now find themselves time laden and bored. Unless such a mother is uniquely capable, she finds herself a prisoner of endless rounds of luncheons and teas, of cards and of bingo, of plant cuttings and of plant arrangements. She finds her world constricted, turning in on itself. She finds whatever sensitivity, whatever interest she once had has been lost. Her world is that of gossip and of clothes and of things. Time hangs heavy upon her hands, and it is not surprising that among such women the rates of divorce and alcoholism have been rising.

Before I turn to my approach to leisure, I think it would be well if I asked this question rhetorically: "Why is it that a Rabbi is at all interested in such a seemingly giddy and trivial subject? What have sunshine and gardening to do with religion?" Now, I might answer, if I were in a light-minded mood, by quoting the old theology: "As God is, so ought we to become," and remind you that God worked way back at the beginning of Creation for six days and has been at ease ever since -- "As God is, so ought we to be."

But more to the point, of course, is that our Bible looked upon relief and recreation, upon leisure and pleasure as wholly natural and wholly necessary for a balanced living. The idea of the divine as sour and dour, as grim-faced, as frowning on the vanities of life has no basis in our Biblical tradition. It has a root in our American Puritanic tradition, and the Puritan fathers drew this sour-pussed nature of theirs from quite other sources. "If a man live many days," the Bible says, "let him rejoice in all of them." "Go, eat thy bread with pleasure and drink thy wine with a merry heart." When the Bible saw a young boy and a young girl on the street holding hands in the springtime, it rejoiced: "Arise, my fair one, my beloved, and come away, for lo, the winter is gone, the



rains are over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing is at hand, the voice of the turtle-dove is heard on the earth. Arise, my beloved, my young one, and come away."

The Book of Proverbs, in a passage not quite as familiar to most of us, echoes this refreshing enthusiasm of our Bible for that which is natural and pleasurable, for that which is vigorous, for love and for youth: "There are three things which are too wonderful for me, four which I know not -- The way of the eagle in the sky; the way of the serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the sea; the way of a young man with a young maid." The Bible is not straight-laced. The Bible is not prune-mouthed. The Bible is not dour. It recognizes that in life there must be dreams that do come true, moments of excitement, moments of exultation, moments which are full of sheer pleasure. Miriam and the daughters of Israel sang and danced their exultation upon the deliverance of Egypt. David forgot himself and danced in public parade as he brought the Holy Ark into his new capital. Why and on what philosophy is this attitude based? It is based on the attitude that there must be balance in life. Two thousand years before Mr. Freud, the Bible knew quite well that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick" and that "joys fulfilled are a tree of life," fructifying and blossoming, giving us strength, encouraging and giving us the necessary confidence to face each new day.

The Bible sanctions pleasure. The Bible, indeed, goes one step further. The Bible sanctifies leisure. The Sabbath is a Law of Leisure. The Sabbath is the most radical piece of labor legislation ever devised by man. It is hard for us sometimes to recognize this. Among us there are now many who work a five-day week. They are at home one hundred fifteen days of the year, almost one day in three. The idea that one-seventh of



one's life is to be at rest no longer seems radical. But let me take you back in time. Let me take you back to the days of our forefathers, when every society on earth was governed by an economics of scarcity. When there was a small leisure class of parasites -- noble and priest -- who feasted off the backs, the sweat, the toil of the hundreds of thousands of serfs and of slaves who had no life that they could call their own, who had no Sabbath and no holiday, no leisure except that which was granted them out of the goodness of the heart of their employer. Aristotle called these people living tools. The term is apt. They were not considered to be human beings. They were human pack-horses. They were work animals and nothing more. We can be outraged at the moral insensitivity of the people who used human beings as a beast of burden. We can be outraged when we read in Greek and Roman literature of these people being called illiterate louts, drunken swine. And worse yet, let us remember that they were precisely that -- what else could they be? Were they given an education, had manners any place in their lives? Were they allowed the privilege of family? Were they treated with dignity? Were they allowed to be human? Not at all. From birth to death they knew the whip of the taskmaster. They knew that time was not theirs. If they were allowed that unusual episodic day of leisure, fatigue was so numbing, what else could they want but relief, drunkenness, forgetfulness?

The philosopher Bertrand Russell has made the case that if it were not for this hierarchic organization of society, for the few who lived off of the many, we would not have civilization today. Civilization is a by-product of leisure. If man must work from birth to death, he has no time for schooling, no time for thinking, no time for painting and sculpting, no time for creating with his hands. If two-thirds of the population of Athens



had not been slaves, Athens could not have afforded the great academies. Plato and Aristotle and Socrates would not have come into being. So runs his thesis. I am afraid that we must reject it. Our ancestors rejected it. They were so outraged at the inhumanity of man to man that they could not accept the statement that the only way that man could have civilization is by an unjust balancing of the human equation. So what did they do? They devised another solution, the Sabbath solution. What is that solution? Simply this: one day in seven, all the wheels of industry and farming must stop. There will be less food, there will be less goods, less things will be crafted, less things will be sold. No man will be as rich, but one day in seven belongs to the individual -- master or slave, rich or poor, it matters not -- and that day, at least, is for learning and for rest, for recreation, for the following out of one's interests.

Would we say that Israel, which refused to conceive of hierarchic society, was any less a creative civilization than Greece? Or Rome? Or Egypt, or Persia? Not at all. The civilization of our ancestors was equal to that of any nation of the ancient world.

There are some who say, "True, the Sabbath was a unique invention of your ancestors which made for the dignity of man and made for civilization, but it is outmoded, it has been outdated by our technological change. Look, there are many whom you know who remember when the six-day week became the five-day week, the sixteen-hour day became a twelve-hour day, then a ten-hour day, now an eight-hour day, and we are even seeing it drop to six and less hours a day. Of what need the Sabbath in the twentieth century?"

I put to you, however, that from its very inauguration in the earliest days of our history, the Sabbath had a dual purpose -- it was a



day of rest and a day of holiness -- "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath unto the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt do no manner of work, thou, nor thy manservant nor thy maidservant, nor thy ox, nor thy ass, for in six days the Lord created heaven and earth, and he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath Day and he hallowed it."

The holiness of the Sabbath, the qualification of leisure by holiness is the second of the unique qualities which our Sabbath has. It is precisely of this uniqueness that I would speak, for I feel we can extrapolate from it. We can project from it to our own leisure.

The first law of the Sabbath was a law of limits. Man was not allowed to go beyond so many paces in each direction. Man could not escape from himself. When we have leisure, our first impulse is to take the keys to our car, jump into it, travel through the night for two hours of breathless scenery or two hours of skiing down a slope. We are so busy trying to escape -- escape what? Ourselves. The niggling questions within. Who am I? Am I satisfied with myself? What kind of life am I really living? What kind of values am I really sustaining? Can I consider I have fulfilled the talents, the promise I showed as a child? The Jew was not allowed to escape from himself. The Sabbath hemmed him in, forced him to be alone in his leisure. We need this quality of quietness.

The second rule of the Sabbath was the rule of work. The work-week activity was to be set aside. Farming and industry, commerce and craft, this had no place in the Sabbath. The Sabbath was a day for unique types of activity, for study, for recreation, for the pursuit of one's avocations and one's hobbies. But the daily toil, this had no place in the Sabbath.



Are there not many of us who walk down the way of life following such a narrow track, looking neither to the right hand nor to the left, that when we are faced with retirement or debility we are shocked and frightened. We have no other interests. We have no other enthusiasm. Our life is narrow, constricted, turned in on itself. We need at least part of our leisure to be devoted to an expanding of our personalities, and our interest in the myriad wonders of our world. It matters not whether it be reading, or a hobby, or an art, or some cultural artifact. What matters is that we be not narrow people. What matters is that we be awake, alive to the variety, to the abundance of the world in which we live.

The third rule of the Sabbath is a rule of worship, of meditation and of speaking gratitude to God. The Jew, on the Sabbath, came to his synagogue. Our leisure has little of worship in it, and it has less of that which bespeaks our gratefulness to God. We take. We buy. We experience. We travel. We ingest. We demand. We give so precious little in return. What is leisure, ultimately, but an opportunity to serve? There is the community. It has a whole variety of unmet needs. It requires hands and minds, personalities and talents. Shall leisure be selfish or does it have a quality of service to it? Americans would surely profit by coming more often to their churches and their temples, where they might speak to God their gratitude for the unbounded blessing which has been heaped upon us. Our blessings are almost vulgar in their extent -- life and health, the world at peace in a land of unprecedented abundance. In a world of skill, of excitement and possibilities, we are dowered beyond any previous generation, and yet I believe that many are selfish beyond the quality of selfishness in previous generations. The third rule of the Sabbath is the rule of worship, of gratitude in the



service, and this quality, too, our leisure requires.

The fourth rule of the Sabbath is the rule of home. The Kiddush with which the Sabbath begins is a home celebration. The Sabbath queen is welcomed to our dinner table. Everyone -- father, mother, child -- has a part. The family fabric is knit together by the Sabbath. No one runs out of the home. But what happens in our American leisure? Father is golfing, mother is carding, Junior is swimming, Jane is slumbering at someone else's house. Our homes are motels, not homes. They are places where we flop, not where we live; where we eat, not where we have an existence. We need to use part of our leisure to draw the family unit together, to live with one another's enthusiasms and interests, to learn the art of human relations, to knit together the fabric of different human beings, striving each in his own way to satisfy the ideals and the love which are at the base of the family. If our leisure were not so fractionalized today, our rate of divorce and separation would not be so high. The fourth rule of the Sabbath is the rule of the family, and our leisure should take this rule to heart.

Someone came into my office during the past week when the title "How To Be A Man Of Leisure" was emblazoned on the bulletin board, and said: "Rabbi, I could preach that sermon in one sentence. All you need to be a man of leisure is to have wealth." This may once have been so. Today there is more leisure, especially among the men of the laboring classes, then among the men of the wealthy classes. Leisure is not a factor of wealth. Wealth cannot buy health or happiness.

Leisure, like labor, requires an understanding heart, a structure, an outlook. It requires certain laws and certain rules of guidance. I have suggested four of these to you. I put it to you that if you so abide



by them, you will find that free time is fun time. It is a time of growth, a time of increased closeness for your family, a time of refreshment of spirit for yourselves. But above all else, it is a time of excitement and enthusiasm. It avoids the boredom and the routine, the tedium and the grayness which so much of our leisure, I am afraid, involves today.

