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The President, the Governor, and the Right to Vote, 1965.

THE PRESIDENT, THE GOVERNOR, AND THE
RIGHT TO VOTE

The Temple
March 21, 1965

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

#143

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Monday night last our President spoke to a joint session of the Congress. His words rang with a sense of urgency. His determination had been spawned in the streets of Selma. His purpose was to secure in fact the right of all Americans to come together peacefully and legally to protest injustice and to demand a redress for their grievances. Monday night the President articulated the decency of our national philosophy.

"Rarely, at any time does an issue lay bare the secret heart of America, itself. Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or abundance, or our wealth or our security, but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved nation. The issue of equal rights for American Negroes is such an issue, and should we defeat our every enemy, and should we double our wealth, conquer the stars, and still be unequal to this issue, then we will have failed as a people and as a nation."

The President drew the context of his speech from the facts of life in Southern rural America. In Dallas County, Alabama, of which Selma is the seat there are 14,500 whites of voting age, and 9,500 of these are on the voting rolls. In this same county there are 15,000 Negroes of voting age, and as of the first of this year 335 of these were on the voting rolls.

In Selma, in Dallas County and throughout the South the white southerner has had things pretty much his own way. Here the Negro, as the Southerner puts it so euphemistically, knows his place. The Fifteenth Amendment to our Constitution has been widely and routinely disregarded. Lest we forget, this Amendment provides that no citizen of the United States shall be deprived of the right to vote by the United States, or by any state, because of race, creed, or condition of previous servitude.

In January of this year Dr. Martin Luther King brought the apparatus of his Southern Christian Leadership Conference to Selma to organize a voter-registration campaign. Negroes presented themselves at the Registrar's desk. These officials dawdled. They would open for one hour, perhaps two, and would process one or two applicants a day. A specious technicality could always be found with which to invalidate the voter of colored skin. The Negro took to the streets to demonstrate against this American outrage. On the streets he was met by official harassment and by official violence, but he was successful in his purpose. The searchlight of national attention was focused on a violence which America will no longer tolerate. When the President spoke, Monday last, he voiced the basic will of the nation. America will no longer be patient with the unreconstructed. The Federal Government will no longer look the other way while the folks back home run "back home" to suit themselves. All Americans who wish to vote will be secured in a right which is constitutionally guaranteed.

President Johnson spoke the will of America and he defined the Government's attitude toward white Southern intransigency. The President has lost patience with the pious cant of the Wallaces of our land who cry out about law and order, who look at every demonstration as intolerable, but who precipitate these marches by their unyielding obstruction of the law

of the land. In his meeting with Governor Wallace Saturday a week, the President reminded the Governor, that if he truly was concerned with public order in Alabama, there was a simple remedy. Let the Governor use the powers of his office to redress the grievances of his fellow citizens, to speed up Negro registration and to grant Negroes the vote and the streets would empty and his cities would quiet.

The President means business. Two days after his speech he submitted to the Congress a strong Voting Rights Bill. He indicated that he wanted this bill or a stronger bill, and he wanted this legislation now. Essentially the Civil Rights Bill provides for a standard and simple registration procedure which would do away with all highly technical forms and tests. If local officials continue to dawdle and to find every specious reason to deny registration, the Federal Government will organize and staff registration places. The Bill provides also that nuisance law-suits will be prohibited. The South cannot use the courts simply to delay. Finally, the Federal Government will supervise elections to see that harassment and intimidation and down-right fraud does not invalidate the Negro's vote. The President means business and in the area of voting rights he has meant business the entire eighteen months of his administration. During the past eighteen months he has moved faster and more deliberately than any Chief Executive in our history. He has converted the potential threat of a choking-off of Federal Assistance Funds into a very real act. Hospitals which refuse Negro patients, universities which refuse Negro applicants, builders who refuse to hire Negro carpenters or to rent or to sell to Negro purchasers, States who refuse to open up their welfare rolls to all equally, all who receive Federal assistance must now conform to the public policy or be denied further Federal aid. The President used all powers of his

Office to secure the passage of the Civil Rights Bill of 1964, which establishes uniform voting regulations. A sixth-grade education was declared a presumption of literacy--all that a state could require of anyone who wishes to register. Segregation in public accommodations, in the restaurants, in the hotels and the motels of the land was struck down. Now the President has submitted the strongest Civil Rights Bill and he has just, these past days, federalized a segment of the Alabama National Guard to protect those citizens of Alabama who will march on their Capitol to petition their Governor to redress their many grievances.

In a truly significant way the President's energy in the area of Civil Rights has communicated itself across the land. Powerful men have moved beyond the platitudes of Brotherhood Week beyond the words to deeds and to citizenship. Some large employers have done more than publicly claim their innocence of bias. "We hire anyone who applies providing he is qualified." They have issued orders to personnel offices to establish open employment policies and to their foremen and to their plant superintendents to promote men without regard to color and they have brought in Negroes to be trained on the job. You and I are not only signing Fair-Housing pledge cards because we are grateful that integration is taking place in some other part of the community and some other block, but we are actively campaigning for stronger Fair-Housing Legislation, and when a Negro moves into our block, or into our apartment building, increasingly we evidence the good sense of staying put and living by principle.

Perhaps most important of all, the President's speech of Monday last highlighted a new understanding among us of the meaning of the picketing, the singing, and the church rally, and the street demonstration which are the forcing edge of the Negro Revolution. The President emphasized it in some highly pointed phrases:

"The real hero of this struggle is the American Negro. His actions and protests--his courage to risk his life--have awakened the conscience of this nation. His demonstrations have been designed to call attention to injustice, designed to provoke change, designed to stir reform. He has called upon us to make good the promise of America. Who among us can say that we would have made the same progress, were it not for his persistent bravery and his faith in American democracy?"

So many of us have been saying "It's true. The Negro has been discriminated against. Since the Civil War the Negro has suffered a century as an outcast. He has been denied the full abundance that is America, but why all of this noise? Why these pickets and these picket signs? Why all these people parading around our streets? Why all these disturbances? Is there not a quieter way to achieve the same ends?" There are, of course, quieter and more gentlemanly ways. Negroes and white have been meeting in our city and in every city to unsnarl any number of ties in the racial knot. There have been groups meeting in Cleveland, this past winter, almost daily, to secure Fair Housing Legislation in Columbus; to secure a stronger and better organized welfare program for our state; to secure better education for the students of our center city. But, ultimately, when massive change must take place in the comfortable habits of a community and when basic legislation must be put on the books to make specific the clear intent of the Constitution, politics requires pressure and confrontation. Action follows demonstration. Action requires a rallying of public opinion in order for the collective will to be marshalled and for there to be sufficient

force to permit the change. In our own city the gentle and quiet meetings have placed books in our schools, but they have not placed a single Negro working man on the Federal Building work force. It is one of the truths in the Civil Rights movement that basic legislation has come about only after prolonged and protracted public demonstration. Such demonstration focuses the attention of the nation and rallies its will; and, finally, the legislators respond. It was the Montgomery bus boycott of five years ago which finally struck down Jim Crow practices in public transportation. The lunch counter demonstrations in Birmingham two years ago led to the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The noise and the parade and the violence of Selma led directly to the Voting Rights Act which the President submitted last week. Even in our own city where the demonstrations have been far less clear in purpose, who of us can say that had it not been for these demonstrations we would have been as active in improving the quality of our education, in improving the quality of our welfare services, in seeing to it that poverty funds were brought to our city, in establishing businessmen inter-racial councils, in establishing all the apparatus of human relations which has come into being during the last several years.

There are silly demonstrations, there are careless and spontaneous demonstrations, and there are, of course, suspicious demonstrations. There are among the demonstrators a rag-tag of those who wimply cannot adjust to society. There are a motley of young people who are simply out for a lark, and there are a few who have no love of democracy and would like to subvert its basic foundations; but in Selma the demonstrations have served a useful purpose. Indeed, they have made it possible for the Negro movement to be evolutionary rather than revolutionary for they have forced mores to be bent and laws to be written. The Negro movement has taken place within the

law because under pressure, the law was enlarged and redefined. Because of these raucous demonstrations, the Martin Luther Kings and the philosophies of non-violence are still dominant and the harsh and violent words of a Malcolm X are minor elements of force. Had it not been for these demonstrations and for their success--had the Negro movement forward been hemmed in behind and before the very foundations of our society would be in jeopardy. What I am saying can be simply put: it high time that we got off of our high horse. It is high time that we stopped complaining and criticizing the noise and the embarrassment of it all and the way this or that is organized. It is high time that we realized the high usefulness of these demonstrations, at least of those demonstrations that are purposeful and deliberate.

Had it not been for these demonstrations how many steps forward would we have taken? Could we look forward to the relatively bloodless absorption of the Negro within American opportunity? Might we not be looking forward to an American Algeria: bloody streets and then a separation into black state and white. Is this not the vision that the Black Muslims place before their followers, and are not the Black Muslims the legion of those who already despair and do not picket?

Most of us have understood the purpose of these demonstrations and we have understood, as has the President, their legality and their necessity. We have been encouraged by the quiet courage, the willingness to accept a blow and not to strike back and the singing confidence of these people. Their example has called out from us some of our own decency. But I wonder what will happen to this understanding when the struggle is in our own streets and no longer far off in Alabama. There is a very good possibility that tomorrow the Negro will take to the streets of Cleveland and begin, here,

a long and protracted demonstration. In Cleveland he has not been deprived of his right to vote but he is deprived of his right to employment. He will protest and there is every possibility that tomorrow night and the days thereafter, we will be reading black chaotic headlines, and looking at pictures of pickets who have thrown themselves across the entrances and exits of The Federal Building to halt construction. Will we have the same commendation for Reverend Jacobs and the NAACP locally as we have had for Reverend King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference way down in Selma?

What are they protesting about? Newspapers report that only one Negro journeyman is at work on the Federal Project in the five major building unions. For three years now, Civil Rights groups here have protested unions which deny Negroes the union card and therefore work. Recall that in the summer of 1963 we had a series of confrontations over this issue during the building of an addition to the Public Auditorium. There have been innumerable meetings between employer and union and between the Civil Rights groups and the government, but substantial result has been negligible. And so the Negro will take to the streets to protest another indignity--the use of tax dollars to sponsor employment opportunity in which he cannot share.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 contained a provision which established a Federal blacklist of contractors and employers who bid for government jobs but who refuse to hire Negro workers. The clear intent of the law was to establish open hiring as a basic policy in tax sponsored projects. In practice, employers could do little. They must hire union people, and the unions themselves have apprenticeship tests and journeyman tests, presumably qualification tests, which allow them effectively to deny the union card to any to whom they wish to deny it. These qualification tests serve as do the

literacy tests in the South to deny and delay the right. Whom the Registrar does not want to enroll he fails. Whom the union does not want to pass, he fails. The Negro is taking to the streets to insist that some kind of governmental pressure in the form of legislation or of administrative decision be brought to play which will insure that the clear intent of national policy in fact be established, and that the charade which is now being played out be ended; a charade in which the government orders the employer to hire anyone. The employer says, I will hire anyone, but I can only hire those who have union cards, and the unions say you can hire any union man, but there is no Negro who can pass the test.

In Selma, the focus was on the right to vote, and the purpose of those demonstrations was broader than the desire simply to enroll the voters of Selma. The Civil Rights Movement wanted a Federal law which would assure the Negro the vote. The focus in Cleveland is on employment. Here the purpose of the demonstrations if indeed they take place, will be far larger than the employment of two or three or a dozen Negro workingmen on one Federal project. The Negro is taking to the streets to force the government to take a hand, administratively or legally to gain for the Negro his right to be employed in the building trades. If at the end of all of this turbulence only a few Negroes are employed in Cleveland, that is not the point--a few more will be employed on another Federal Project in another city--a few more on another Federal Project in a third until gradually the Negro will have had opened to him another segment of our economic opportunity.

What of those who say that disturbance breeds disturbance? What happened in Collinwood this last week, happened, in part, as a direct result of the black headlines and the gory television clips of the truncheons, and the tear gas and the beatings in the South. Perhaps so. But must we not take into consideration the truth which the President spoke to Governor Wallace?

If we want peace in our city, if we want quiet in our streets, there is a simple way: let us redress the grievance being protested. The fault lies not with the Negro. The fault lies with the economic order of things, and if we are concerned with peace and order, if we are concerned with the security of our city, if we want to move forward beyond this shuffling and this violence to a better community, then we must put the pressure upon the employers, upon the unions and upon the city government and break up the discriminatory merry-go-round so that the Negro may have those rights which are legitimately his.

We celebrate, today, the Festival of Purim. Purim commemorates an ancient deliverance. The history of Purim is a simple one. There was a plot against the Jew. Queen Esther was willing to demonstrate before the King in behalf of her oppressed people. She called to the King's attention an outrage which Haman was about to commit. The conscience of the King was moved. On purim it is well for us to review our attitudes toward demonstrations in behalf of justice. We ought not to complain, but to approve. There are pointless demonstrations that can be overlooked, but the thrust of these demonstrations must never be overlooked. They have made it possible for the Negro to come closer to his rights within the framework and context of our democracy. They have made it possible for all of us to look forward to days beyond the present racial struggle when we will have come, as our Megillah says

"From turbulence to joy and from heartache to a better day!"

Rarely in any time does an issue lay bear the secret heart of America itself. Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or abundance, or our welfare or our security but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved nation. The issue of equal rights for American negroes is such an issue. And should we defeat our every enemy, and should we double our wealth and conquer the stars and still be unequal to this issue, then we will have failed as a people and as a nation

The real hero of this struggle is the American negro. His actions and protests, his courage to risk his life, have awakened the conscience of this nation. His demonstrations have been designed to call attention to injustice, designed to provoke change, designed to stir reform. He has called upon us to make good the promise of America. And who among us can say that we would have made the same progress were it not for his persistent bravery and his faith in American democracy.



hand untroubled. The Fed. Govt. should no longer look the other
 way to suit the interests of any class who had not now
 run long "back home" home away. The Constitution provided
 all citizens the rights and those who wanted to have been by
 the point - must have been rights. Mr. Johnson also said at
 least that he had run out of patience with the "un-American
law" and the walling of the civil liberties are still
 broken in an individual ^{Turbulence} ~~of the public order~~
 as the President ^{The} ~~should~~ ^{have} ~~but~~ - a small - if you really
 want ^{Public} ~~order~~ order you have only to use your official power to
 reduce the excessive grievances of those ~~who~~ ^{are} ~~in~~ ^{the} ~~country~~
~~country~~ who believe you, you have turned down and of
 had for the past century, Their purpose gained; the public order
 will surely be ~~in~~ ^{the} ~~streets~~ ^{streets}



centering meeting in put before a ^{major} ~~and not~~ ^{major} ~~meeting~~
in the Federal Bldg
~~meeting~~
The significant ~~breakthroughs~~ in the Council right ^{stage} ~~has~~ ^{have} all
come of the mass protest & demonstration forced the ~~meeting~~ ^{responsible}
will of the
nation.

The most famous New York with just highlighted ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~subject~~ ^{subject} of the
Crown Jewels and led to the end of most such practices in public
trans-portation.

The Birmingham riot in a land confrontation demonstration - 1968
Cannon, fire hoses & police dogs - led directly to the passage
of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The Belmont murders which began to fund the year -
Sheriff Jim Clark's transformation of the city - led internally to
the Revolution made with the city.

Close to home the for the last defined period of 1968 & 1969
at the University of Chicago and the University of California at Berkeley led
directly to new ideals concern in the country & the general acceptance
of a series of renewed responsibility within the social system.

When every one can say that we should have
continued our efforts to bring about these changes
we have made then it is not for the future
getting to the point of demonstration.

Demonstration is the major most effective pol. weapon -
when used in response to the rights of the minorities and the poor
and put the whole country in confusion of the mind
Demonstration is the major most effective pol. weapon -
as the President reminded us last week it is a definitive

legal, & proper recourse — one of the unpleasant features of
 which our nation is confronted at present is your delay,
 what I can say can be very real: it is that we are not
 doing of our high hands and stopped completely about the
needs of the immigrant the disruption of it. It is high
 time that we reorganized the high hands — the united confusion
 of these several branches — for it is not been for years of the
 American change and by house integrated — house
franchise system should have been in the house.
 & single — even improving conditions — a few years ago of the
 was a block of immigrants. America has improved, because the
moving of the and and have been able to use the very method
the house protected by the country.
 of immigrants have a limited following business the reputation —
time passed the immigrants to put it to rest and
to remove one of the immigrants to immigrants
which is the case.
 To be sure there have been no demonstrations and strikes
demonstrations. To be sure there are many the demonstrations a
small group of the immigrants and of the immigrants sent for
the look. There are some for the immigrants to
up the immigrants social for the immigrants — but on the immigrants
the demonstrations have been a useful immigrants purpose to
and have spent all the time and energy in the
of complaining, Parliament demonstrations can only be

the demonstration was intended.

A demand to pass of the demonstration is employed
and the expected result for transmission and body. The fact
of 1964 established a blue list of employees who would
responsible being released, more than then it has become
enough to be a major threat and political legislation in
break open the networks of tasks and appeals from
by which some lawyer may answer pressure. See
other activity, 2. members to apportioning task for
the short months months months to some persons in the
history task in Colombia - 25 the register document and
you - you don't pass. Yet I am afraid that may be
who upheld Rev. King will see in him will
under Rev. Judge & the NAACP in Canada

What if we agreed what we see in main history
demonstration books for other plan of main - total
to main of Colombia H.S. main in put a main of the
TV days & main main main? main. main main
are not only to main main of the main main main
as, main to main main - main to main
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2 of for my main main main main main - main
an main & main main main main main main

under discrimination - not against ~~these~~ people &
counteracting protest ~~and~~ discrimination,

[illegible]

To-day - we celebrate our national holiday of Rosh Hashanah -
the new year. It is a time when we pause to reflect on the past
and to pray for the future. We are grateful for the many blessings
that have been sent to us, and we ask for the continued well-being
of our people and our country. We are proud to be part of the Jewish
community, and we are committed to the values of justice, peace, and
compassion. We are also proud to be part of the American Jewish
community, and we are committed to the values of democracy, freedom,
and the rule of law. We are grateful for the many ways in which
we are able to connect with one another, and we are committed to
building a strong and vibrant community for the future.

My dear Mrs. Lee
~~person~~ ~~rejoice~~ rejoices, I from morning into
 a good day -

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They use big understanding & agreement help
to spread word by ~~that not all the friends~~ - word -
trust

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#143
ABSTRACT OF ADDRESS DELIVERED BY

RABBI DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

AT THE TEMPLE, SUNDAY, MARCH 21

"THE PRESIDENT, THE GOVERNOR AND THE RIGHT TO VOTE"

Monday night last, President Johnson made it clear the time has run out for the unreconstructed American's will to have the right to vote. The President has run out of patience with the Wallace's of the land who complain that street demonstrations are an intolerable attack on the public order. As the President put ^{it}, Governor Wallace has only to use his official powers to redress the legitimate grievances of his negro fellow-citizens and the streets will be quiet.

The President's speech was instructive of our nation's heightened understanding of the tactics of street demonstration and public marches. "Who among us can say that we would have made the same progress were it not for his (the negroes) bravery and his faith in American democracy." We have spent altogether too much time complaining of the noisiness and embarrassment of these protests. The simple truth is, that gentlemanly meetings can put a few books in the public schools but do not put negroes to work on the Federal Building.

The significant break-throughs in the field of civil rights have all come as a result of prolonged and often heroic public demonstration. Street demonstrations are the negroes most effective political weapon, and, as the President reminded us, a legal and legitimate weapon. More than this, the gains which he has won in this way have kept his program within the law and have, therefore, assured the stability of our social order. To be sure, there have been silly demonstrations and there have been a rag-tag of the unstable among the demonstrators, yet, on the balance these demonstrations have strengthened our democracy and brought us closer to a just social order.

Tomorrow our understanding of the tactic of demonstration will be tested. The virtual absence of negro workingmen on our Federal building has lead the civil rights organizations to call for public demonstration. There have been innumerable meetings on this problem, but these meetings have been singularly devoid of result and finally demonstrations have been scheduled to force results.

In Selma, at issue was the right to vote and the ultimate purpose of the Selma demonstration was to secure legislation which would guarantee negroes across the South their rights. In Cleveland the issue is employment and the expected result here to transcend a few working men on one Federal project. The apprenticeship tests which now govern entrance to some unions serve the same purpose as the literacy tests in Alabama. If the union doesn't want you, you don't pass. Cleveland is one of the cities where the negro working man will try to force the issue to see whether legislation cannot be enacted which will permit him opportunity even in these unions. Believing, as we do, in human equality, we must believe that just and proper policy can, in fact, be instituted.

It is not easy to see your community so challenged, yet we must remember the tenor of the President's remarks to Governor Wallace. Those who protest legitimate grievances are not at fault. If you wish peace, you have simply to grant proper redress.

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^{CALL FOR}
The building has lead ~~to~~ civil rights organizations to public demonstration. There have been innumerable meetings on this problem for a year or more. ~~We have~~
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