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Series III: The Temple Tifereth-Israel, 1946-1993, undated.

Sub-series B: Sermons, 1950-1989, undated.

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Rosh Hashanah sermon, 1965.

## ROSH HASHANAH 1965

### THE TEMPLE

September 26, 1965

RABBI DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

Good Friends, a lively stream of wisdom flows through the worship of our people. I propose that we refresh ourselves at one such source. The Adoration is familiar. We recite it near the conclusion of every service. The Adoration is appropriate. It was first written for the liturgy of this high holy day. "Let us adore the ever living God and render praise unto Him, who spread out the heavens and established the earth. His glory is revealed in the heavens above and His greatness is manifest throughout the world. He is our God, there is none else. We bow the head and bend the knee and magnify the king of kings, the Holy One, Praised be He."

"Let us adore the ever living God." I have heard Rosh Hashanah described as a requirement of the calendar transformed into a useful exercise in self-analysis. Most of us rather welcome this annual character inventory. We feel the need to step back from the frenzy and the bustle and take a clear hard look at ourselves. Good intentions have a way of becoming frayed at the edges. Indulgence, repeated often enough, can no longer mask its grossness. From time to time we need to balance reason against passion, wisdom against prejudice, decency against selfishness, and Rosh Hashanah is an appropriate time for our yearly examination. The image many ~~have~~<sup>hold</sup> of Rosh Hashanah is that of a rather crude scale. A simple cross bar with two pans hanging from it. We place into the one pan our virtues, our constancy, our honesty, our charity. Into the other pan we place our wrongs -



the bitter words, the calculating ambition, the ugly acts, the self-serving half truths. We strike a balance. The balance is always too closely weighted for our peace of mind. There is moment of contrition. Remorse leads to resolution. We will take ourselves in hand. We will make something more of ourselves.

However familiar this image of Rosh Hashanah may be, it is only a crude and amateurish <sup>ish</sup> representation of a far more profound and subtle truth. In fact, the scale image is pagan, not Jewish. According to ancient astrology, the constellation Libra, the balance, was ascendant during this season of the year and folk wisdom grafted Libra to Rosh Hashanah, superstition on to the sacred season.

Why do I say that this image of the scale is crude and naive? For this reason: it is psychologically ineffective. We pile on our virtues and our vices. We take our measure in our mind's eye. We nod to ourselves, 'yes we can do better.' 'We will spend more time with our family.' 'We will say a kind word to our associates.' 'We will be more considerate of others.' The scale suggests modest improvements. The scale suggests the need to tinker a bit with our habits and routines. The scale fails to suggest the fundamental challenge of Rosh Hashanah. Justify yourself. Explain yourself. Where are you headed and why? What are you struggling for? And, is it worth the struggle?

Compare the Hebrew original to this artless copy. There is a judgement, But we do not judge ourselves, God has us before His bar of judgement. God does not make a quantitative tally of our virtues and our vices. Rather He asks about the quality of our ambitions. If our lives have been fundamentally self-seeking, God will not be satisfied with a promise to visit an infirm parent, or to be friendly with our neighbors. God demands that our lives be tied to consecrated ambitions. He demands Teshubah. Turn away from the mean! Turn away from the vulgar! Turn away from the unworthy, the crass and the superficial! 'Return, oh Israel, unto the Lord thy God.' God demands a turning to the good, to the



noble, to the sacred.

The purpose of Rosh Hashanah transcends the teachings of virtue. Rosh Hashanah does not set out to teach ethics. History is replete with biographies of decent, well-mannered and patient people whose private virtues were canceled by their lack of vision. Members of the British Colonial Service, Ante-bellum Southern plantation owners, come immediately to mind. God challenges us this night not to live gracefully but to live worthily. Will you serve me? Will you serve the God who brought our fathers out of bondage into freedom, who demands that we establish justice and freedom - equality and opportunity for all upon this earth.

Our faith has always insisted, and rightly so, that morality begins in theology. The Ten Commandments depend upon the first commandment, "I am the Lord Thy God." The great principle, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," rests upon the greater principle, "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might." Godliness must precede goodness. "Holy shalt thou be, for I, the Lord, thy God, am Holy." Good manners are welcome. Good manners are necessary but sometimes good manners must be pushed aside in order to get on with our work. Sympathy is a virtue but sometimes there is no time for sympathy - when there is God's work to be done and the evil must be burned out from our midst.

"Let us adore the ever living God." The adoration of which we speak tonight is not a multiplication of words, but the magnification of goodness in our lives. We are not called upon, tonight, to perform a child's task, to tally ~~the~~ pluses and the minuses ~~of the past year~~, to find how we <sup>might</sup> ~~could have~~ added one or two more good deeds so that the balance could have been more in our favor. Not at all. We are challenged tonight to *פולד / 10 פד* - a thorough examination of conscience



and the state of our soul. The question is not did we live gracefully, <sup>but whom</sup> ~~Whom~~ do we serve? God or Mammon? God or Thor? God or Mars? Do we live by the most consecrated of ambitions of which we are capable or do we drag ourselves along after some unworthy master?

"Let us adore the ever living God and render praise unto Him who spread out the heavens and established the earth. His glory is revealed in the heavens above and His greatness is manifest throughout the world. He is our God, there is none else. We bow the head and bend the knee and magnify the king of kings, the Holy One, praised be He." The words are spoken easily and all can appreciate their spiritual beauty. The words seem proper to this hour and yet there are many, some I am sure here, who will not take these words in their full raw reality. It is easier to see them only as metaphor, as poetic image. There is something in the modern temper which boggles at any philosophy which includes and insists upon the Divine. The moral teachings of the tradition receive unqualified approval. ~~The~~ Theology is qualified and questioned, sometimes looked on as a medieval relic.

"Let us adore the ever living God" - I assure you that these words were not spoken metaphorically. God is <sup>ה' / יי</sup> the ultimate reality of the universe, the ultimate wisdom which inspires creation. If the language of the Adoration be metaphoric ~~we are set to a pointless task~~, we waste our breath on ancient litanies. Only if we adore God, the real God, the life force, the wisdom of the universe, only if we adore God by turning towards this wisdom, by seeking to consecrate our lives unto it - only then, can this evening have meaning. Only then can it be a day of purification, a day of remembrance, a day of growth.

The words are easily spoken but some of us find them difficult to accept.



Our age is rather convinced that God has been dethroned from the skies. ~~On~~  
 Space ships cruise the near reaches of the planetary system - ~~our~~ radar telescopes  
 probe the dimmest recesses of the galaxy and they make no report of God. There  
 is no physical contact with the Divine. God has not been found out there in space.  
 So, some have come to believe that all talk of faith, is something of an intellectual  
 scandal. <sup>Presumably</sup> One can believe only if he is willing to suspend his reason or to take a  
 leap into ignorance, or at least to have a tightly compartmentalized mind, in one  
 half of which, he puts his knowledge of scientific fact <sup>while</sup> and in the other half ~~in~~  
~~which~~ he keeps his pious hopes and his theology. Indeed, not a few divines have  
 proclaimed from their pulpits the death of God and have made themselves into  
 seven day wonders as they sit <sup>sheva</sup> over His demise.

The truth is quite the opposite, I assure you, faith is not an intellectual  
 scandal. One does not need to suspend reason or take a wild jump into the im-  
 probable in order to have faith in God. In fact, one needs not so much a suspen-  
 sion of reason as an intensification of reason - a willingness to look beyond the  
 world of apples and atoms, beyond the narrow world of fact, <sup>into</sup> the world's  
 vastness and ask How? Why? By whose will was all this created? How came  
 it into being? We have found that there are many geometries, and many logics.  
 There is the logic of the laboratory and there is the logic of love, ~~and~~ there is the  
 soul as it responds to the miracle of being - to the miracle of conscience - to  
 the miracle of a universe. Here we are. How came we? Here is this vastness,  
 this vault of the universe. How came it into being? We did not place it there.  
 Wonder, awe, amazement - these are the logical tools of the soul. This is the  
 logic by which the soul reaches out and seeks to understand the world about it.

We are surrounded, my dear friends, by evidence of God's presence. But  
 legend one night Abraham was walking along a ledge as the deep of night descended.



there are many who cannot see it. I am reminded of the peasants in Galileo's days <sup>who</sup> refused to put their eye to the lens piece of his telescope, lest they see God. I am reminded of the comment made by Premier Krushchev some years ago, as he chuckled at the pious of Russia. My cosmonauts looked all about them, ~~he said~~, from their porthole and they could find no trace of God. The peasants of every age have confused god and nature. The Bible's wisdom lay in that it separated substance and spirit, form and matter, creation and creator. Listen to the words of our Adoration. "Let us adore the ever living God who spread out the heavens and who established the earth. Whose glory is revealed in the heavens above and whose greatness is manifest throughout the world." Solitudes of space tell us something of God - the complexity of life, the organic unity of this wonderful world, consciousness, all these, somehow, reflect, testify to God. But, they are not God. "Thou canst not see my face but I will make all my glory pass before thee." God is not the heavens but He is somehow reflected by the heavens. God is not the universe, but He inspires it and is reflected to us from its reaches. God is not within us, but there is something within us that speaks of God. God is not creation, but creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the earth reveals His handiwork."

Our teachers delighted to embroider the legends of the Bible and they told this story of the early life of Abraham. Abraham, they said, was abandoned as an infant <sup>and</sup> was raised and guarded by the ministering angels. Abraham was apparently a boy of quite exceptional intellectual apparatus and talent and of his own, he invented the basic artifacts of civilization; the plow, the hoe, the axe, the wheel. In time he began to ask the inevitable philosophic questions. Where am I going? Why? What is demanded of me and by whom? According to the legend one night Abraham was walking along a ledge as the deep of night descended.

to achieve our ends burned the symbols of the one God, the books, the crosses and the Synagogue.



Suddenly the skies sparkled with a stellar profusion. Abraham was awed and he said to himself, "Surely these distant stars which shine with such brilliance are God." And he worshiped the stars as his God. He worshiped the long night, but the morning came. The morning light erased the stars. Now the sun had command in the heavens. Abraham bowed before the sun and he said to himself, "Surely the sun is God." Night came, it was a hazy evening and the stars could not be seen - only the autumn moon, low and rich in the sky. "Surely the moon is God." There came a cloud and the cloud covered the moon and then, according to the rabbis, Abraham made the leap of reason which stands at the basis of our faith. All that is in nature is wonderful and awesome. All that is in nature reflects the divine, but only the Creator is divine. Only God! We have eyes with which to see the majesty of the universe, ears with which to listen to the melody of the spheres - there is evidence all about us of the presence of God. The existence of God is reasonable and evident. The belief in God is a creditable enterprise, and I submit to you that it is an urgent one. When God was dethroned, his place did not long remain vacant. The age of faith was replaced by the age of ideology. Man projected upon the heavens his own small knowledge, his own narrow gospel of salvation. Lacking an overarching truth, man sanctified his partial understanding of the truth. This, he said, is God. Economic and political manifestoes replaced the Bible. They were modern, but somehow in all of these ideologies, the dignity of man, the inviolability of consciousness, the integrity of the moral law, disappeared. The moral covenant born in the worship of God was replaced by a manipulative code which saw men only as pawns in the grab for power. The new prophets were replaced by those who said, "We serve only our party, only our case, only our state and in our service we are above the moral law." To celebrate the triumph of this new morality, these ideologies, any means is justified to achieve our ends, burned the symbols of the one God, the books, the crosses and the Synagogues.



What is ideology? Any ideology? It is the worship of false gods. It is the ancient sin of idolatry. No sin is more damned or excoriated in our Bible and none more dangerous. A criminal act may be an act of passion, a break in a lifetime of control. Ideology subverts the whole life for it turns life away from self fulfillment and service of God to the fanatic service of some questionable cause. Ideology infects the mind. Is it not true that in this age of little faith and in this age of powerful ideologies there has been violence beyond credit-that men have performed bestialities beyond description and justified them. "He is our God. There is none else." "He is our God, there is none else." If we can say these simple lines, this Rosh Hashonah, Rosh Hashonah will have worked much of its spiritual benefit. We will be saying this: 'I have political convictions. I have economic beliefs. I have a standard of values, but I admit that I am mortal, subject to error. My ideas are not sacrosanct, sacred, revealed. I am willing to be reasoned with.' Ideology drives reason from the human enterprise. Faith in God establishes reason as the coin of human intercourse and only when there is a congregation of reasonable men can democracy and peace flourish.

"He is our God, there is none else." If we can say these simple lines in simple truth, then we will have gone far not only towards freeing our lives of the ideologies which imprison them, but towards freeing our lives of the passions and the prejudice which are our household and private gods. We have sanctified our appetites, our passions, our pleasure, our possessions. In so doing, we do homage to jealous, ruthless masters. They allow us no peace. They allow us no calm. There is never enough. We can never enjoy the simple quiet pleasures. Love can never be constant. We must always reach out for some new experience. There is always a mirage, a promise of greater pleasure, and it never comes. All that is truly meaningful today is cancelled in our urgency to have more



tomorrow. Tomorrow never lives up to its expectations. Home, friendship, love, decency - all these are sacrificed on the altar of pleasures and passions become the jealous masters of our lives.

Some of us have deified our ambitions. We serve a cruel task master God. We serve a God who has no consideration of others, who urges us to elbow our way through life. Do not think of another, serve Me and Me only. What of it if you must widow your loved ones? What of it if you must orphan your children? You must sacrifice energy, time, even honor, at my altar and lay it down to me as a holocaust. Those who serve the God of ambition know that we serve him in a way which demands our every energy, which leaves us wracked, and empty and incapable of the enjoyment of life.

And some of us have sanctified and deified our prejudices. We serve a blind God, a God who fills our lives with tales of nightmare; frightening and frightful. He warns us of danger at every turn. We are turned backward. We flee from one neighborhood to another, from one community to another, seeking a security where there is no security, fleeing we know not where. An enemy lurks behind every face. Danger lurks behind every corner.

Some of us have deified ourselves. We serve a vain and capricious God, a clever chap, who destroys our every friendship, our every experience of love because he whispers to us, "your loved one, your child, your wife, your husband, your friend, does not pay you adequate court." The pantheon is large.

" יש לי אלהים אלהים שלי ," the prophet Ezekiel said, "Each man raises his own idols into his mind."

Tonight we are sharply aware of the spell of these foreign Gods, over us—these idols which are of our own creation—these passions, these addictions,



which are unworthy of us. We would it were otherwise, but a fugitive wish is not enough. We know it to be wrong, but recognition and confession are not enough. Idols must not only be denied, but shattered and plowed under. What is for it then. Listen one last time, to the words of our Adoration. "Let us adore the ever living God and render praise unto Him who spread out the heavens and established the earth. Whose glory is revealed in the heavens above and whose greatness is manifest throughout the world. He is our God, there is none else. We bow the head and bend the knee and magnify the King of Kings, the Holy One, praised be He." Only the worship of the one obliterates the worship of the many. Only as we magnify God, only as we magnify the God who gave us the moral law, only as we magnify the worship of the God who orders us to establish justice and freedom and righteousness with the gates, only the worship of the one God can supplant the worship of the false gods. How shall we accomplish our return? The sanctuary is an open place. The scripture is an open book. The way of faith is an open road. The hardest step is the first step. Nothing stands between us and a life in which we struggle towards faith, towards God, towards decency in our living, towards an understanding of which is demanded of us, towards a consecration of our lives except fear and habit. Our faith will not be magically transformed in an evening. It is the patient search of a lifetime. The symbol of Rosh Hashanah might appropriately be a long road moving out before us towards the sunset. There are no obstacles except our own lack of will. The way is long. We cannot go along it with too much baggage. Tonight we must ask ourselves: "Have I the courage to set out?"



A lively stream of random phrases should be recording of our  
people. I propose that we refer ourselves alone and service.  
The education is periodic. At end of our service, we need it.  
" ... " appropriate. It was just under, for R.H. half day

Let us also...

Let us also be even long bed. Some hard R.H. included as a  
representation of the calendar transformed into a useful exercise in self  
appraisal. Most of us rather welcome an occasional opportunity to  
step aside from the frantic pace of our lives and to take a deeper look  
back at ourselves. Our best intentions have a way of becoming  
faded at the edges. An indulgence repeated often enough no longer  
seems indulgent. From time to time we need to balance deeds  
against selfishness; putting ourselves in the place of others  
similar reason ... appropriate and R.H. seems an

appropriate time for our yearly self appraisal.

The image may have of R.H. in light of an image - CRUDE  
paints hanging on a single bar - We place on the one pan our  
virtues - on honesty, on decency, on loyalty; and on the other our  
weaknesses - the bitter gossip, the calculating ambition, the self serving  
half heart, we stand in balance. The pans are all too unevenly weighted,  
We are not too proud of our record, Remove clashes to Revelation, who  
will take ourselves in hand

Unfortunately this mental image of R.H. is but a cherry and  
artificial representation of a far more profound and subtle image,  
In fact the image is paying not justice, ancient technology











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 questions the past answer as not done but yes graciously  
~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ - but did not leave unanswered For the same  
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 and in Journal 1913  
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~~Let us know...~~

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~~We need~~ - for application of ~~the law~~

We need exhaustive search of literature - But to

above the Greater - the ultimate number of life - the  
above ~~the~~ the number of the concentrated life - to  
be the number of the higher number  
to be the number of the

and there too <sup>and</sup> ~~somebody~~ <sup>that</sup> every year we are out to see - and as the  
now drive out to see - we are <sup>well</sup> quite in land down the  
toward the gully & the long road / The fulfill of every year  
tally will be as is







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logic of life - investigate, how as the logic of the mind is the  
~~and~~ to the mind of the world - if the mind of  
conclusion, to the mind of the world -

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by was open to put up to be seen that was all that, What can  
person griffin Prophet K. described at the time " no conclusion  
concluded all over the world and not a word of the world and the  
me ". The person was to explain the and the matter, into  
the conflict between the two pages

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and the world  
gratification in manifest



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are my you and I will make all my eyes see before you "  
one person and the world is not the world is not the world  
the world is not the world - done by man to perish in the  
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"There I can't see my face". We don't need to read off  
 our series from an account in order to believe in God. And in fact  
 we needed but the whole of God's work, and in fact we needed  
 at the same time to believe in God and in his work.

Field card submitted to my  
 left of Ab. - ~~He~~ <sup>it was said to</sup> abandoned as a child ~~and~~ <sup>and he</sup> by the  
 military camp. ~~He~~ <sup>As he grew</sup> his mind developed well in school  
 the incident on his ~~own~~ <sup>own</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> ~~all~~ <sup>all</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~time~~ <sup>time</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~life~~ <sup>life</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> ~~all~~ <sup>all</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~time~~ <sup>time</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~life~~ <sup>life</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> ~~all~~ <sup>all</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~time~~ <sup>time</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> ~~life~~ <sup>life</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> ~~at~~ <sup>at</sup> ~~all~~ <sup>all</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~time~~ <sup>time</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> 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ANNOUNCEMENTS

ROSH HASHANAH MORNING

Severance Hall

A CHILDREN'S SERVICE will be held in The Temple only at 2:15 P.M. today. Children under school age should not be brought to these services. Parents are requested to sit with their children.

Rabbi and Mrs. Daniel Jeremy Silver will be at home to the members of The Temple and their families this evening from 8-11 P.M.

Residence: 2841 Weybridge Rd. Shaker Heights.

On Yom Kippur, evening services will again be consecutive. The early service will start at 7 o'clock and the second service at 9 o'clock. The congregation is urged to be in their seats by the time the service begins, as the doors will be closed at the beginning of the Kol Nidre.

Those who wish the names of their dear departed who passed away during the past year mentioned during the Memorial Service on Yom Kippur afternoon are requested to send those names in before Friday, October 1st.



OPENING ROSH HASHANAH SERVICE

THE TEMPLE, CLEVELAND, OHIO

1965

Unannounced Shofar Call: Tekiah - Shevrin - Tekiah Gedolah

Reader: Zeh ha-yom ha-rat olam. This day was chosen as symbol of God's creative wisdom. Where were we when God laid the foundations of this earth? Did we command the times or the seasons? Did we place the stamp of infinity upon the heavens? Creation is God's miracle. Creation is our blessing. Before creation we stand reverent, offering our prayers in humble adoration.

Choir: Chant Genesis I:1-5

Shofar: Tekiah Gedolah

