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The Last Ten Years and the Next: Reflections on a Decade of
Preaching, 1965.

#151

TEN YEARS OF PREACHING

The Temple
Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

October 24, 1965

I was first privileged to speak from this sacred pulpit ten years ago last week. Ten years represents a full act in a man's adult life. To continue the image, a tenth anniversary properly becomes intermission, an occasion to mingle with good friends, and to be critical and analytical about the first act. Was the action purposive or aimless? Has the conversation been vapid or pointed? These, I presume, are the thoughts all of us share when we pass some such anniversary. Have we taken hold of life and made something of it or simply reacted, existed? A rabbi must make still another judgement. Has the Judaism which he has been teaching, been relevant and useful? Is the old faith up to date or has it only an antiquarian interest?

It is to this last question that I propose to address myself this morning. Chance had it that these last ten years bridged two ages in the history of man. Ten years ago the Sputnik One had not yet orbited the earth. The first laser beam had not penetrated the dim recesses of outer space. Man was still earth-bound. He had not yet broken the shackles of gravity. The space age has hardly begun, but one fact is preeminently clear and the evidence seems conclusive: There is no God up there. There is no God out there. Our astronauts, our radar, our telemetric photography have scanned the heavens and reported on energy and on radiation, on the planets and on the stars and without exception they report no physical evidence of the presence of God. Some have assumed that since there was no God up there or out there, there is no God and that space age science

has finally laid to rest one of the most persistent and lingering of all human illusions.

This much is true. Many popular notions of God have to be discarded. We can no longer hug to ourselves the welcome thought of a cosmic grandfather, benign and helpful, who watches over our destinies from some place beyond the stars. This is the God who appears to us from the golden background of those medieval altar pieces, the royal God, crowned and throned, seated above the stars, who judges the angels and man, who receives their petitions. This God never was, never had been. Whence came this rather physical image of God? In all honesty we must say it came into Western faith when our stepdaughter religion, Christianity, compromised the second commandment. The Bible insisted that God was wholly other, purely spirit, holy. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image nor any manner of likeness of anything that is in the heavens above or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor serve them." Eager to appeal to the pagan world, Christianity allowed the icon and the idol and the image in stained glass to be brought into the sanctuary. Despite a more correct theology, her actions lent crediality to those who believed in a physical God. After all, they saw about them at worship, his physical presence.

Such is the pressure of our environment, that I have heard my people, our Jews, echo and parrot the denials of a disabused generation. 'There is no God up there.' 'Therefore there is no God.' I am moved to ask when anyone taught them that there was a God up there? Was this the teaching of Moses? Was this the teaching of Hillel? Was this the teaching of Akiba or of Miamonides or of any modern rabbi? One of the grand and glorious facts

of our history is that our faith never compromised with a Biblical understanding of God, an imageless God, a God beyond attributions, a God beyond description, a holy other God. "I am that which I am." "Thou canst not see my face." Stubbornly, consistently, Judaism insisted that God cannot be defined or described. When the psalmists said: 'lift up your eyes on high,' he was not pointing to the place of God rather he was indicating the reflection of God etched in the wonders and marvels of creation. "Lift up your head on high and see who has created these." God is not creation but Creator. God is reflected in the sparkle, in the miracle of creation, but he has no place some place out there. God is not up there but everywhere. God is not someplace but everyplace. No understanding Jew ever believed that one day there would appear on a radar screen, the blips, which would indicate the physical presence of God in the universe.

Has the space age banished God from the realm of sensible discourse? There are many, I know, who believe that God is simply a convenient explanation of that which science has yet to explain. As science leaps forward, God is in hot retreat. As science advances the scope of God's possibility and power diminishes, we have become accustomed, you and I, to the attitude that science undercuts religion. We believe it almost axiomatic that to have faith man must take a blind leap into the unreasonable. Not so. I put before you one of the unexpected paradoxes of modern science. In recent times, science has lent confirmation, substantiation to some very old statements of our faith. No one expected it to be so. Science and religion had been at each other's neck ~~to~~ these many centuries. Somehow science has rounded a corner and, amazingly, its new understanding of the universe lends encouragement to the old image.

Recall for me and with me, if you will, the science, the physics that you learned in your classrooms. Remember the old iron law of cause and effect? The world was described to you as a vast and intricate mechanism, a self-winding watch if you will, but infinitely complex. There was only apparent change and there was complete predictability. All of energy, all of matter follows out certain iron unbreakable paths and laws. There was no chance. Everything was determined and pre-determined. Oh yes, we were told, if you want to believe in God as the first cause, go ahead and believe it. But, you are using a word which has no meaningful reference: The first cause is not the God of faith. Faith assumes that God directs human destiny and that God listens to human prayer or that God performs wondrously. Many of us still carry about the remnants and the relics of this teaching and we have not recognized that this 'scientific' model of the universe has been consigned to the scrap heap. A new model has emerged. The universe is no longer a mechanism but an organism. The universe is no longer simply a predetermined acting out, following laws of energy, but an emerging, vital, alive cosmos thrusting forward, full of change, full of the unexpected. A universe which responds to an imprinted wisdom. There are in this new universe, sudden leaps of energy. There is in this universe biologic mutation. There is in this universe change. There is in this universe an upward thrust from the simple to the complex, from gas to matter, from the inorganic to organic, from the inanimate to the animate, from the simplest forms of organism to man. There seems to be imprinted upon this new universe, not a law of predictability, not the iron chains of cause and effect, but the loose silken chains of probabilities. There is change and there seems to be not only motion but direction, emergence of the handiwork of God. The scientists and the men of faith unite today in reverence, in

awe, of the imprinted wisdom of creation. Again we can say with the ancient psalmist: "The heaven's declare the glory of God, and the earth reveals His handiwork." Now, this is not to say that science proves God. God is clothed in wonder and in mystery. God is as far beyond the laboratories as ever, but this new model that science has presented to us of our world--the model of a world in motion, moving towards, surging upward, moving out, emerging--surely this image of the world speaks of imprinted creative wisdom, bespeaks the hand and the wisdom of God.

We have spoken of God. Let us speak for a moment of man. There are some who believe that religion is simply the affirmation of God. Judaism, at least, is equally the affirmation of man. Over the long centuries, Judaism has stubbornly insisted that man is capable of great and grand things. Despite all the evidence of human cruelty and violence Judaism has insisted on human capacity, on the possibility, on the dignity, on the possible divinity within you. You are not a slightly civilized beast but created in the image of God. If you have the will and the courage and the understanding you can become but little lower than the angels. Now again, until very recent times both experience and science argued against this radical affirmation of man. A dyspeptic could always find ready evidence of human cruelty, human violence and human pathology. Nineteenth century science found that we were tied biologically to the lower beasts. On the basis of biological evolution some thinkers constructed a determinist psychology which insisted that man cannot shake his nature anymore than a leopard can change his spots: Therefore we are creatures of impulse and of instinct and we cannot discipline these instincts. Our passions, our appetites, our lusts, our ambitions are forever part of us. Man remains beast beyond dignity and beyond saintliness.

The world will always remain a dog eat dog jungle. And, of course, this view of man seemed to receive dramatic and shocking confirmation in Dachau and Auschwitz and at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Unexpectedly the space age developed a striking confirmation to Judaism's ancient truth. Though we have evidenced the depths of human depravity, a new model of man has emerged in the laboratories of our civilization. True, man is tied biologically to the lower forms, but evolution is not a steady inching forward. Evolution progresses by sudden jumps and unexpected mutations rather than linearly. Man was not a slightly transformed ape. Man is the first animal who can control his environment. Man is the first animal who can conceptualize and pass on his learning from generation to generation. Man is the first animal who has the latent capacity to control himself and who has devised a society which permits childhood, tender loving years, adolescence, learning, the emergence of the human being from the animal instincts. We are told that man is, indeed, made of rare stock, that we have the capacity to love, to outgrow our baser impulses, to outgrow our violent compulsions, to become respected, respectable, dignified, decent. Biblical man is no longer a pipe dream. And our new science is teaching us how the environmental forces of cultural deprivation, the slum, inadequate education, the broken home, lack of love, lack of opportunity - all can and do conspire to keep most men from realizing their human potential. The animal child grew into an animal man, because he had no opportunity to be human. The prophets call for justice and righteousness in one with the sociologists who call for a welfare state where the opportunity to grow sound and whole and able is offered equally to all.

Ideas forged by our ancestors way back in the Iron Age are receiving striking confirmation. Ten years ago when a rabbi spoke of God as having created man after his own image, there were many who smiled indulgently at this poetic exaggeration. Today, the scientist and the rabbi share a common understanding of man. The biblical philosophy stands vindicated, but modern man has yet to meet the test. The Bible is not only a faith, a set of principles, a philosophy but a mandate, a challenge, a responsibility. We have yet to show that we can abide the biblical responsibility. "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless plea for the widow." The biblical philosophy stands confirmed. The biblical psychology is creditable. But, take this to heart. Biblical history is also creditable. The prophets taught these truths to a generation which would not listen. They were at ease and preferred to follow after the stubbornness of their hearts. Israel preferred to be politically ambitious and domestically passive. Ultimately the clash of rich and poor created a maelstrom of social turmoil which sealed the nation's doom.

Whenever I talked of the Prophets over the past ten years, men thrilled to their exalted moral vision, but they balked at the impending sense of doom written large in so many lines of prophecy. "The Lord God doth roar from the heavens." We do not like to think nightmarish thoughts. Yet, do not our planes roar aloft every hour of the day bearing in their bellies the weapons of ultimate destruction? Are not atomic-headed missiles capable of destroying our earth buried into the earth and placed into submarines under the sea? Does not the Lord again roar from the heavens? The

hour is late. We can read today the sentence of doom and the statement of urgency with a new sense of its appropriateness. We talk about it, don't we, endlessly. And yet, you and I continue by and large to live as if we were any other place but at the brink of disaster. The mind has an infinite capacity to block unwanted thoughts. We are in a plane. The pilot announces a serious malfunction of an engine. We worry for a moment or two and then we find ourselves in idle and aimless talk with our neighbor. On the plane we are helpless. There is no destiny save the destiny which we ourselves make. On earth we pilot and direct our lives.

Would you have peace? Your hands and your heart and your action can create it. Would you have prosperity? Together we can establish it. There is no awful fate etched for us someplace up there in the skies. We create our destiny, we and all who share this earth with us. We face a future of unparalleled promise. Our science here again comes to our aid. It has broken the ancient yoke of poverty which broke men's spirit and destroyed opportunity and kept most men hapless beasts of burden. We have immunized ourselves and our children against most of the crippling and of the devastating diseases and we can look forward to four-score years of life. Our bins are full, no stomach need be empty, no man's vigor need be unnecessarily sapped. We have found resources of energy which promise warmth and transport long after the crude resources within the earth have been exhausted. The promised land. It is just beyond the horizon. The Prophetic image of the time of peace and of sunshine, when every man can sit under his vine and under his fig tree and none will make him afraid, is more than poetic enthusiasm. Today, government can be

busy legislating the great society. It is achievable. It can be ours. Thrice blessed our way and blessed again. No mother need fear child-birth. No child need lack for education. No man need break his health to earn a living. Thrice-blessed are we and blessed again. There is no disease which we may not ultimately conquer. Thrice-blessed are we and blessed again but thrice burdened are we and burdened again. The need is for a heroic moral courage. The ancient standard, live and let live, mind your own business and I'll mind mine, is the surest way to contort our promise and to convert it into a curse. The time is **short**. Population uncontrolled will gobble up our abundance and return the majority of men to the cruel yoke of poverty. Those prejudices which we cherish are ready weapons in the hands of those who seek to protect their privileges and powers. Prejudiced men become ready pawns for those who dream fanatic dreams. That golden future which lies out there just behind the horizon can be distorted, brutalized. Play on the fears of the generation which lacks adequate education and they will quickly become the minions of some tyrant. It will be hard to loose his boot from off the neck of man. There is great promise. There is great danger. The Lord doth roar from the heavens, and man needs to roar in response his commitment to the good, to the necessary, to the urgent, to services, to his community, to responsibility, to peace, to a life beyond that of his daily routines.

The ancient truths, my dear friends, have proven out. Man is yet to prove himself. We have it in our power to construct a grand and glorious society but there is no assurance that we will do so. Most of us are still timid saints. We are ^{half}hearted in our virtues even as we are halfhearted in our vices. I'm afraid that the new age requires ~~far more of us~~ **far more of us**

than a rear guard action against social change. I'm afraid the new age requires our protest, not only that of our children. I'm afraid the new age requires us to give up privilege and to share only in the privilege of citizenship. I'm afraid the new age requires a radical new understanding of policy. We simply cannot build the instrumentalities of peace by building the instruments of war. I'm afraid the new age requires a radical transformation of our attitudes towards our neighbors, towards men of other races, towards those of other classes, those of other nations. We must accept a world of change, a violent world, and lend to that world, our understanding and our vision.

You and I have an especially sacred mission. The Prophet Isaiah speaks of the time when ten men shall come unto every Jew and shall say, 'the Lord is with you, teach us His way.' We, who have been blessed with this ancient truth; we, who understand fundamentally its dimensions, we, who know what it means to believe in God and to believe in man, we, who understand the fundamental moral mandate of citizenship and selflessness, we must find for ourselves disciples and we must lead by noble example. It is not enough to live, and to let live. It is not enough to do our business, to raise our family, to give to the various appeals of our community - it is good, but it is not enough. This is an age in crises. Time is late. God is urgent. God demands a service of the whole man - heart and soul. I pledge this to you - that in the next decade I will use every skill I possess in this service and I ask that you join with me in testifying to God before man. In testifying to the ancient truths before our generation. Amen.

Always seems to have been underlying fault for no long time that ^{many} ~~has~~ ^{has} accepted as axiom but fault is irreversible ~~as~~ ^{as} ~~into~~ ^{into} ~~just~~ ^{just} illogical - the reality of a long degraded state under ^{all} +

fact, Recall the physics you were taught. To every man, there is a mediated effect. The reversal ^{was} an unending and most modern sufficient & complete in collaboration, matter follows down & refused prohibited down. There is no change in reality & only apparent

change. Speak of us if you could in a direct First Cause - the Execution of us it also started (if you need such a reparation) but recognize that in life all is determined and there is no room for belief in a last under universe process, perhaps unending as interference in any way in the under universe of life.

most of us were reared under one and the same model. What most of us have failed to realize is that we are no longer secretly accepted. Speak of us in a direct First Cause - the Execution of us it also started (if you need such a reparation) but recognize that in life all is determined and there is no room for belief in a last under universe process, perhaps unending as interference in any way in the under universe of life.

WRHS

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

change - change, one universe has not only under been but divided - under down of energy, under and mutation, an unusual blend from simple to complex form, from down to up, from backward to forward, from dark to light, from death to life. And yet there is something positive and can see the hand of god - indeed, an omnipotent god is where see to be governed. Our last reference of the unprinted universe. Paul says "The heaven again declare the glory of god & the earth revels this glorious work".

truly significant purpose. When another generation would be asked
 at what they believed to be the ^{price} ~~illness~~ of men they would
 still the capacity of denied - and men like it quite readily
 in a word (a careless) - if believing the message to be at all
 as honest.

I arrived after at the high degree of ^{truth} ~~truth~~ a man ^{understands}
 understands - 3 or 4 years later ^{on a new} ~~truth~~ ^{contents} ~~truth~~
^{Hebrew} flair of Hebrew, just now is a most creditable testimony ~~to the~~
~~of the same age~~ ~~most creditable~~ ~~to the~~ A man
 once again that which is intrinsically valued in man's nature
 does not necessarily come late in time, namely is not a simple
 act of reluctance.



One full line has been referred to the past and yet passed the
 test. The Bible is not of the same kind as a prophet, The full
 words explain the words of the past, The past of the past is the
best of the past.

Work year, much year done
 But away from the end of year done from the end of the year
 Come to do and
 Come to do well
 such justice, justice as is possible
 just the fullness, plead for the end of the year

(Should be to!)

It is one thing to tell a man - Heaven can be quite
can fittingly be done by the man himself to
help himself in the end of the year and half needed will be

The Phila^{del} is an old (under)

The project ~~thought~~ - I ~~thought~~ forcefully - but they would not have a
generation which was not seen in 2 years - I would be killed after

The stabilizers of the ^{linear} one point must continue to be relativists

solution, & a closely interconnected — & social as a weight as a

a series of interrelated attitudes & a policy of national interest

We have used it - a long time

But having many of us here as if we were ~~convinced~~ ^{convinced} about it

But having my eye fixed on the
on the bank of the river, I saw a small

on the bank of the river, there were
but the most rough. By now we were a good distance

sent to night more thought. I have
on 2nd handys again tried me for some more in
10.1.10 - 10

has made today eyes to an excellent - but - the

from mobile today, says to me that
please see me before 10 - after next week @ first, so

6 years in not helping - a process as a flight of

Let us. We intend the future of all the Anglo-American

never be a guarantee for the future with greater security,
 we have reached the heavy yoke of poverty which we had to go
 on to help of the ^{should be} children, elderly, we have arrived on
 against the unemployment of children - the unemployment of children
 promise an unlimited need for work. Our land is full &
no more stagnant need to work, no more stagnant need for
children, no more need for work of poor unemployed people
unemployment & poverty has been the main reason of the world
have been eliminated.

no more need for children
 no more need for work
 no more need for work of poor unemployed people
 The alliance between the unemployed & the unemployed people.

These alliances are the main reason of the world
 & poverty is the main reason of the world
Responsibility for the unemployed people.



The time has come for the unemployed people.

These alliances are the main reason of the world
 " unemployment " " unemployment "

The need for work - The need for work of poor unemployed people
high spiritual work - The need for work of poor unemployed people
it - will then be eliminated into unemployment - Population
will eliminate the present unemployment & poverty will be eliminated
the unemployment will be eliminated the unemployment will be eliminated
be just one to any unemployment & poverty will be eliminated
by an unemployment in unemployment & poverty will be eliminated, Population
eliminate the unemployment will be eliminated the unemployment will be eliminated

Kaddish

Friday Oct 22 1965
Sunday 24 1965

Those who passed away this week

LOUIS J. SHLESINGER
JOSEPH H. TYROLER

Vahrzeits

DR. ISADORE B. SILBER
SADIE HARRIS
ARTHUR FRIEDMAN
LINDA BAER
CELIA JANOWITZ FREEDMAN
EMANUEL ROSENFELD
AUGUSTA MINTZ
MAX GREENHUT
SIDNEY M. SCHOEN
ARNOLD NATHANSON
JACOB WEISKOPF
FLORENCE FULD ULLMAN
LOUIS L. SQUIRES
HANNAH C. KOBLITZ

EDITH CLARA WEINKLE
MAX HOLLANDER
JOSEPH KOBLITZ
JENNIE WODICKA MERTZEL
SOL H. SCHACHTEL
BENJAMIN F. KLEIN
SARAH BENSON HARRIS
HELEN K. WULIGER
ISAAC E. SPERLING
JENNIE REITER KLEIN
CLARA SCHWARTZ
JACOB REDER