



Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

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MS-4850: Daniel Jeremy Silver Papers, 1972-1993.

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

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

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Confirmation Service and Sermonette, 1967.

CONFIRMATION SERMON

Daniel Jeremy Silver

June 14, 1967

Israel during this last ten day period has become a symbol of tactical genius and brilliant courage. In six short days a small country beleaguered by many enemies bent on its destruction, gathered their armies and won for itself a reprieve. The world understandably saw this battle in terms of the ancient biblical contest of the young David, the professional soldier, and the wizard veteran, Goliath. It was a proud victory and never forget that behind this victory lay a desperate drama of survival. Israel did not want war, Israel did not seek war. Ever since Israel was proclaimed by the United Nations it has had only one aim, to live in peace and build bridges of friendship, to explore the possibilities of co-existence. And ever since Israel has been established its neighbors or most of them have had only one ambition, to erase Israel, to deny to these people life and land and hope. Mr. Nasser had defeated the Israeli defense forces. He would have fulfilled his pledge to enter the land not on a red carpet but on a carpet of blood.

Now the events of the last ten days parallels your preparations for Confirmation. They were dramatic even as this day has high drama for you. And when you think back on your Confirmation you will inevitably intertwine your recollections, the memory of these events, and this is just as well. For in the texture of this recent history is written large so many of the basic themes, the consistent dimensions, the fundamental commitments of our Jewish life. You will applaud the victory. You will remember it with pleasure, but I pray that you will remember also Israel did not seek these battles. Recollect and keep in mind the image as shown on your television screens before the war, wards dancing war dances, frenetic, hysterical

dances of anticipation, mobs shrieking in their various capitols, kill, murder, erase that land from off the map. And remember the parallel image, the quiet, silent, unemotional, unhysterical image, photograph of the Israeli, mobilizing, preparing for war, preparing to counter the threat that was aimed at their throat, but doing so without pleasure, without anticipation, without bloodlust, not because they wanted to but simply because they had to. As Jews war is not a mityeh. . We marched to the sound of the shofar not to the ~~sound~~ chassont of the trumpet and the shofar sounds bid us to obey the commandments, these laws, the laws of human relationships, the laws of justice and dignity of righteousness and of love. The trumpet summons men to obey only commanders, to shoot, ploy, kill. These are not our laws. Never in the Bible will you find Israel bidden, "go out and conquer, place the stamp of your authority on this land or that neighbor, " - never once. Rather our Bible commands "seek peace and pursue it, " ^{at} Seek peace and pursue it. War is ~~the~~ most, at its very best, a grim necessity. Civilized nations, civilized people, go to war only when emotion has cancelled reason among their neighbors, when greed has overwhelmed basic understanding and when some glazed eyes laub as knife to the jugular vein, only then, defend your life, your limb and all that is precious. You undertake that which is at its very best and most - self-defense. *Peace* is all ~~goodly~~, *our greeting*, is our spiritual capitol, to beat the swords into plowshares and the spears into pruning hooks is the message that we preach to the world. Our ^{is} is described as a man of peace who draws tranquilly at his tent and that is our ambition and that has been our practice and that has been our hope. Israel never spawned conquerors, emperors, generals of voracious appetite. We spawned the prophets. We taught men the techniques of sainthood and not the technalities of knighthood. So it was and so

is and praise God it shall ever be. For war is vain. War is an attempt by one nation to grab the wealth, the land, the possession and the power of another nation. War simply redistributes the wealth of land which now exists and in the process it devastates land and destroys wealth. War is wasteful, wasteful of all that represents civilization. War is destructive. Civilization, progress, takes place only when men build, not when men destroy. Progress takes place when we raise the city high, not when we raze the buildings we have already built.

We are called the children of Israel. One can vocalize this phrase as the builders of Israel for upbuilding has always been our vocation. As Jews we are to hope, to teach, to establish justice, to secure righteousness, to raise high the hospitals and the laboratories and universities of civilization, to do justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly before God. That's our mityeh, not war. We go to war only if we are forced to. For Israel is known also not to confuse patience with passivity. Israel has learned the hard way not to give over all that it has and all that civilization has built to the despot, to the maddened, to the bully. Our men have fought, we've known bravery, the bravery of silent patience and the bravery of what we stand for. David stood up to Goliath. The Maccabees stood up to those who desecrated every sanctity of our faith. Bar Kochba went up to the might of Rome which was seeking to crush all the sanctities of Israel in his day and modern Israel has stood up to the hate and to the vengeance of the Arabs. But neither David nor Judah the Maccabee nor Bar Kochba or the Israelis of our day sought these wars nor did they seek to extend their territory by these wars. They sought only to be alive, to

it is the speaking of truth and it is the pushing back of the boundaries of darkness.

live, to live in peace. Israel has lived, as you well know, an heroic history, but ours has also been a hard history. And we have learned not to be innocent. We have learned never to forget that there are men who are cruel by nature, there are men who are amoral, that there are nations that are maddened by the nightmare images of the despot and the demagogue, that there are people who are angered by decency, and there are people who damn us for being simply what we are. We know that we cannot expect to nullify the gentle work of upbuilding civilization without at times having to make much more serious sacrifices, without at times standing up for the very right of being the right. And when that has been demanded of us we have not been behind hand. We shall not die, but live and declare the work of the Lord.

These days then, my Confirmands, these days then reveal so much of the basic texture of our Jewish life and if Confirmation be what I firmly believe it to be, the pledge that our share of history will be your destiny, that the past is prelude. Take this past to heart. It's heroic and noble. It begins with a simple proposition that Israel has never walked the high road of armies and legions and parades, that we ~~have not~~ are not self-domination. We have walked the humble road teaching, studying goodness. And where are the great empires and here is our faith and our teaching spread across the globe. History reveals also that war is fundamentally worthless. War bankrupts an economy. War interrupts education. War destroys human life. War ravages the family and the city. War allows violence to break out into the street. War is worthless. And it is the upbuilding, it is the reaching out to touch another human being, it is the act of kindness, it is the moment of love, it is the speaking of truth and it is the pushing back of the boundaries of darkness,

it is the profession of service, it is these things which are fundamental, which are basic to all that gives us hope in the future.

Finally, these days in our history teach us that we cannot expect to live and let live, and to be allowed to live simply because that is the only goal we seek. No matter how well-intentioned our motives we cannot simply to be allowed by this world to live our lives and to raise our families, to finish our schooling, to go about our work, doing our duty, paying our debts to society and expecting no more. In the lifetime of your parents, in the lifetime of so many who are here, men and women who were confirmed at this very altar, not so many years ago, there were open ovens at Auschwitz and Dachau. And there were the closed doors to immigration and to Israel. There were the riots and the pogroms. There were anti-semitic outbreaks of many ~~various~~ kinds and finally these three wars aimed at the annihilation of Israel.

In security, is unfortunately the hallmark of our destiny, it keeps us close, it keeps us on our guard, it keeps us concerned and determined, but never let your guard down so much. Never forget that simply because you are good and seek the good there may not be others who seek to do you hurt. Protect yourself. Protect all that you cherish courageously and sacrificially if need be. Stand for what is true, stand tall. Speak what needs to be spoken and speak it forthrightly. Do what needs to be done and do it without worrying of the consequences. Stand with and for your people and learn to turn aside the occasional anger and sneer and hate of the world. Such has been always the history of all peoples who have stood for goodness, for the commandments and who have sought to do God's service. The legions of the devil are here even as the armies of God that exist.

You confirmed yourselves this day into an heroic faith. Our history

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is a noble one. In our history we have known suffering and hurt; we have known nobility; the privilege of service to the highest. Your pledge made now to join in this immortal band, to join with all men and all women who seek to carry out God's will. That pledge is a pledge which will bring beauty and grace and challenge to your lives. It's a pledge worth making; it's a privilege worth undertaking. Undertake it responsibly in reverence, join the immortal band. Be prepared for its trials, be privileged in its responsibilities.



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is also your letter - for the past present
& by consequence you give us a vision that
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to be done; to be done where every one is able
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In a few years should always be done -
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For post

Good night

Beach Bay

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for home use