



Daniel Jeremy Silver Collection Digitization Project

Featuring collections from the Western Reserve Historical Society and
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

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

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

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

Reel
50

Box
16

Folder
890

Founders of the Faith: Ezra, 1968.

Sunday, February 25, 1968

The Temple

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

Islam began among tribes who lived in a chain of cities along the western coast of the Arabian peninsula. Islam exploded from this restricted land across the entire Middle East and within a century had conquered most of the Mediterranean world. Within Mohammed's own lifetime his soldiers conquered Egypt, Palestine and Syria. As the Moslems conquered the Middle East they came into control of and in conflict with large numbers of Christians and Jews. This presented a theological problem. Mohammed had sent his warriors out to do war for the one god, Allah. The Christians and Jewish communities claimed that they worshipped the same god, that they too were monotheists. Late in his life Mohammed was forced to produce a theological explanation for his faithful explaining why they should continue to fight for the one god against Jews and Christians. So, in the Koran you can read these surprising words: "The Jews worship Ezra as the son of God; the Christians worship the Messiah as the son of God. They speak exactly as the abominations of the pagans: 'Go, and do battle against them.' " Ezra is equated with Jesus as an object of religious devotion. Christianity has long been troubled by the question whether it is a trinitarian or monotheistic faith. Does it worship the one god or a god in three parts? How does it equate the three and the one? But, Judaism has been strictly a monotheistic faith for centuries and had been so for a millenia before Mohammed. His comment about Ezra was a deliberately falsified statement intended to give a justification for continued attacks on Jewish communities. But it must have been based on something. Perhaps some convert to Islam, someone who wanted to be close to this new center of power, had told

Mohammed that in the Talmud one can read that after the return from the Babylonian exile, Ezra and the Torah surpassed the Temple. What the rabbis were saying was that Ezra, who re-established the Torah, did a far more lasting job for the Jews than those who built high the walls of Jerusalem and re-established the sacrificial service. Jerusalem fell. The sacrificial service necessarily was abandoned, but the Torah remains the constitution of the Jewish people. Perhaps some of his scouts told Mohammed that in Babylon near the river Kaba there was a tomb reported to be the burial place of Ezra, and that Jews and Christians and others came there to light lights, to offer prayers and to seek faith healing. Perhaps he had been told that one of the rabbis had said that if Moses had not preceded Ezra, Ezra would have been fully worthy of having received the commandments. Whatever the reason, to Mohammed Ezra personified the central figure in the Jewish tradition.

Ezra occupies a special place in the history of our people and in its folk piety. He achieved and personified the re-establishment of Judaism after the disasters of the sixth century Exile. He began what we call rabbinic Judaism because he made possible the triumph of the Torah as the constitutive document of our corporate life.

What manner of man was Ezra? What do we know about him? To understand Ezra we must review briefly some history. The great but short-lived kingdom of David and Solomon was split upon Solomon's death. The northern kingdom, called Israel, was comprised of ten tribes and retained its independence until the late eighth century, when it joined a misbegotten alliance against Assyria. In 722 B. C. E. Samaria was captured and the northern kingdom was conquered. Many of its people were deported to Assyria and the land re-settled with non-Israelites.

This is the beginning of the legend of the lost ten tribes. In point of fact these unfortunates were not lost but lived hard anonymous lives in captivity. Some of them assimilated into the communities about them. Others were re-assimilated into the Jewish fold 125 years later when Judah, the southern kingdom was captured and many of its upper class were brought to Babylon as captives. These exiles brought with them a more developed Judaism, one which was able to survive and develop in captivity. Fortunately, this second Exile had strong and vigorous religious leaders, especially the prophet Ezekiel, and the unknown prophet, the one we call the second Isaiah (Deutero-Isaiah). These men opened their homes to the people, read the Torah to the people, fixed the calendar so that wherever Jews were scattered they might know on what day the holidays and the sabbath were to be observed, and, taught their compatriots a doctrine of hope, of return, and national renewal.

Such preaching was psychologically healing. Man needs hope. Fortunately, this prophecy came true and quickly. Within two generations of the conquest of Jerusalem its Babylonian conquerors were overthrown by a new race of warriors from the plains of Iran, the Persians under Cyrus. The Persians had no particular interest in the Jews but they had a totally different concept of imperialistic rule. They had watched the Assyrians and the Babylonians attempt to impose an iron law upon the varied ethnic groups of the Middle East. They had seen the Assyrians and the Babylonians insist upon conformity and they had seen how this demand for uniformity disturbed cherished attitudes and created such violent resentment that the kingdom was constantly in rebellion. Cyrus was determined to prevent this kind of churning. He proposed to calm the waters by giving the people a little bit of freedom. And so, the Persians demanded absolute loyalty and imposed severe taxes but at the same time allowed the Egyptians and the Jews and the Syrians to have their own cult and to govern themselves by their own law. The Persians gave money

to re-build temples which had been pulled down by their predecessors. The small kingdoms could live their own lives according to their own customs as long as they did obeisance to Ectabana the Persian capital.

And so it was that in the year 536 B. C. E. a descendent of the house of David, Shesh Bazzar, and a descendent of the priestly house of Zadok, Joshua, were empowered to return to Judea and to restablish in Jerusalem the Temple and some form of minimal Jewish self-government.

A rough comparison can be drawn between 536 B. C. E. and the 1880's and 1890's of our era. Only a few came. There must have been Zionist rallies all over the Persian empire, but only a few were willing to undertake a pioneering life and to cut themselves from their small security; to give up their business, uproot their children and travel the long distance to the uncertainties of the Holy Land. Shesh Bazzar came and Joshua came and they had high hopes but they were few. They began to lay the foundations of a new Temple, but they never were able to complete it. A small temple finally was opened about 20 years later. They began to rebuild Jerusalem but it remained largely ruins. Here at Gezer, here at Hebron, here again at Bethlehem they established agricultural communities, kibbutzim, but they were never really able to do much more towards recreating a state. As from 1880 to 1940, so from 536 to 450's B. C. E. a small group would come every year. A few would follow a forceful leader who said, we need to re-build Judea for the sake of our faith. Pioneers would come. Hasidim came. Another community was established and another. More homes were built in Jerusalem; a business opened here, a school there. But, the community lacked structure and a sense of its own integrity. It was still a scattering of people. And though every Jew in the Exile wished Zion well, Judea lacked the thrust,

and drive to assure its success. Judea needed a Ben Gurion and found him in Nehemiah.

Nehemiah was a high official in the administrative bureaucracy of the Persians - cup bearer to the king. Nehemiah was a powerful man, a devious, a ruthless man, a pious man. Yes, all of these traits can be bound up in one personality. Nehemiah had a brother who had made a trip to this part of the world and who had reported on the sad state of affairs in Jerusalem. Zion reborn had not lived up to the high hope of the Aliyah brochures and Nehemiah determined, for reasons at which we can only guess, to go to Judea and give Jerusalem the thrust which the community seemed to need. He petitioned the king for a mandate. The king empowered him as governor of Judea. This itself is important. Heretofore Judea had been a minor county within the district of Samaria. Now Judea was to have its own authority, of course, within the authority of the Persian empire. Nehemiah surrounded himself with a coterie of friends and admirers who agreed to go up with him and having received the annual United Jewish Appeal allocation, a great deal of gold and silver to bring up to the people for their schools, their hospitals and their farms, Nehemiah, surrounded by the cavalry which the king of Persia had lent to him for this journey set out to rebuild Judea. And he rebuilt Judea. He came and was skillful and determined. In fifty-two days he raised the wall around Jerusalem and built its gates and that was an achievement identical and equal to the building of the Hagganah. A city without a wall could not be its own master. A wall was your army. It was your way of crying out, 'I am independent.' Nehemiah saw the ruins of Jerusalem and its depopulation. He drafted 10% of the people from all the kibutzim and he said: 'You must come and clear the debris and you must live in Jerusalem and be our craftsmen so that this city can again become one of the important commercial

entrepots of the Middle East.' He was careful of the social needs of the community. Modern Israel has a socialist government. Nehemiah probably did not know the name but he went about establishing equal justice. The royal taxes were heavy and they were oppressive and the poor of Judea who lived largely by barter, did not have the coin to pay the taxes. They had to borrow money from the rich and the rich demanded their land or what furniture they had as deposit, and did not, of course, return it. Nehemiah demanded that the rich return all the pledges that had been forfeited and he imposed heavy taxes on those who refused. He voided the law which permitted creditors to take the children of those who were in their debt and sell them as bondsmen. He tried to prevent the marriage of Judeans to the daughters of the land. When the Judeans had returned they had found that most of the land the families had once owned had been taken over by Arabs and Edomites and Samaritans who had seized an opportunity to get some rich farmland and some rich pasture. Many Judeans in their turn, rather than buy this land, took the easy way which was to marry the daughter and become the heir. A number had married for greed, There was danger in these kinds of marriages because these people called themselves believers in the one god but had a syncretistic worship. These women brought with them idols and their superstitions and black magic and all the rest. Nehemiah tried to prevent such marriages and legislated against them and by his own confession he was monumentally unsuccessful. But you have here the picture of a vigorous man, an able administrator, a man willing to take risks. Like all such men Nehemiah had to pay the price of his determination. At one point his enemies conspired against him and he was recalled to Ectaban. He lived for twelve years in disgrace until the king repented and allowed him to return. In any case, what you have in Nehemiah is the image of the aggressive Zionist pioneer, the architect of a state, the man who could give sinew and flesh to the body politic.

But, a community needs more than flesh and muscle. A community needs a heart, a sense of unity. Ezra gave unity to the Jewish community. Ezra too was a member of the Persian bureaucracy, but on a far different level. Nehemiah had been one of the grand counselors of the king. Ezra was a university type attached to the state department as an administrator particularly knowledgeable in Judean affairs. Ezra was a sofer. That means that he was a scholar, who had poured over the ancient laws and knew the intricacies and the ins and outs of Hebrew legislation. We do not know whether Nehemiah requested such a man or whether, after hearing the reports brought back from Judea Ezra recognized the need in Jerusalem for somebody who could organize and give it structure. In any case, he went to one of the officials in the foreign office and received a mandate which allowed him to go to Jerusalem to examine and report on the condition, not on the Jewish people, but of Judaism.

You can see the difference between Ezra and Nehemiah, in the way they handled their ascent to Palestine. Nehemiah brought his friends along and asked the king for a cavalry escort to make sure that the money he had with him would be safe and sound. You wouldn't have trusted your money to Ezra. Ezra had talked so much about God's protection of those who serve Him, that he felt that he could not request the authorities for a military escort. God would have to protect him. And, so that year the campaign contributions were taken up to Jerusalem without military escort and they got there just as well.

When he had arrived in Jerusalem Nehemiah had set about immediately and decisively to administer policy. When Ezra came to Jerusalem he offered sacrifices. He went to the Temple and Prayed. Four days later, before one of the gates of the city, he began to tear his garment, pull out his hair, pull at his beard, all signs of mourning; and with a shriek and a wail he sat down on this plaza and said not a word.

Imagine, if you will, that a representative of President Johnson would come to Cleveland and would appear in Public Square and all of a sudden shrieking and wailing would sit down by one of the monuments. The Press would be there. Television would be there. We would all be there. This is exactly what happened in Jerusalem. Ezra sat silently through the morning and through the noon day and the long afternoon. The throng grew about him. Only as night fell did he begin to. He did not speak to the television camera nor to the reporters nor to the people. He spoke to God. He offered a prayer. It was a confession of the sins of his people, this people. And what sin did he particularly confess? That they had taken unto themselves foreign wives who introduced foreign practices into the faith and that they had not been willing to give up these wives when they had been reminded of the danger by Nehemiah. Such was the power of this man, such were the loyalties that beat in the heart of the Judeans, that when he was through with his prayer, the Bible tells us that everyone cried out and wept, and they came to Ezra and said: 'three days hence we will convene a great convocation of all the Judeans and we will take measures to cleanse our people. Three days later this convocation was held and a hundred and one men who had married women of the land divorced for God and turned again their houses into Judean homes. It was not a large number. Jerusalem was not a large community. The issue was symbolic. Ezra needed something, I believe, which would symbolize to the Judeans their unique role as the keepers of the flame; at the center of the faith; something which would remind them that they set the pattern and the standards which would radiate out into the Diaspora and become the norms of Jewish life. If their faith was weak and had assimilated all kinds of foreign elements, then all Judaism would be a pop culture - a little more than an exaggerated reflex of the world about.

These women were divorced. Homes again became Judean. A few months later, on the very anniversary of the day on which Solomon had taken the ark of the law from

the citadel of David to the Temple, Ezra re-convened the people in the same plaza. He climbed onto a pulpit and he took out the scrolls which he had brought with him from Babylon, and for six hours he read from these scrolls to the people. Now, of course, these rules were old. The Torah for the most part represented the ancient law and the ancient rule. But, the Torah had been preserved away from the people. It had been kept in the Temple under the control of the priests. For the first time in the Babylonian exile it had been taken out and read and established as the inheritance of the whole household of Israel.

Ezra was an expert in this law. He read it and his aides interpreted it to the congregation. Then, after this long reading, all raised high their hands in prayer and shouted 'Amen, Amen,' which means, 'we certify it, we accept it, we agree to it.' There seems to have been a sense of fear and awe about this day which Ezra then set about dispelling. The law of God was not to be a burden but a blessing - the law was not fearsome but a living joy. Ezra ordered the Levites to organize this day as a happy holiday among the people.

But it is one thing to be caught up in the moment and agree generally to a lot of words spewed out to you and another to change lifelong patterns. Ezra recognized that he would have to take every holy occasion and specify specifically the practice required upon it. That year he appeared before each of the holidays to show how each should be observed. The first to come along was Sukkot. He read to the people the appropriate laws and he regulated their practices according to these laws. There was a sharp pruning away of many customs which had cropped up over the years. In our synagogues today we still follow the practice on each of these holidays of reading the basic rules appropriate to that holiday from the Torah.

Our tradition tells us that with Haggai, Malachi and Zechariah prophecy ceased in Israel. These prophets lived in the generation just before the generation

of Ezra. For Ezra to accomplish his work prophecy had to cease. Prophecy is the voice of the living God. It is revelation. Theoretically prophecy could abrogate the Torah. There have been mystics in all ages and all faiths who have said, 'We deny that God wishes you to follow the injunctions of the Torah or the New Testament or the Koran. Only do this - this is the true way.' Prophecy had to cease in Israel in order for the Torah to become its central document. Fortunately, the Torah was sufficiently balanced and sufficiently deep to provide Israel with a law which, like our own basic law, could be interpreted and re-interpreted, in which the basic themes, the moral aims and spiritual values could be searched out, and used as guidelines for the growth of the community.

There is a real analogy to be made between Ezra's time and our own. Nehemiah and the modern pioneers of Israel have done their work and they did it magnificently. Ezra gave direction to the community which Nehemiah had built. I suspect that the Jewish community in Israel today needs a man or men such as Ezra to unify its spiritual direction - to give it something more than self-defense, as a sustaining principle. But all analogies are rough. Israel does not need an Ezra. Ezra took the living word of God and bound Israel to its law. Today in Israel there is law aplenty. There is the Torah. There is the Talmud. There are the codes. There are the questions and the answers - the sheelot and teshubot of the Middle Ages. There are the statements of a whole list of modern rabbis. Religion as it is placed before the modern Israel is heavy with law. I suspect that what Israel needs is someone who can speak in terms of the living word of God - someone who can open up windows which will let in the cleansing air. Prophets who will touch again the living words of faith.

According to the Talmud if Moses had not lived, Ezra would have been fully worthy of having received the law of God. I do not see Ezra as a young adventurer. I doubt

that he had a prepossessing physical frame. His eyes were clear, his mind was rich with the learning of many years. He was a man whose faith and piety communicated itself without words. One knew it. One did not have to be told of his academic background. When his work was done Ezra disappeared. After the year in which he interpreted the law to the people we hear nothing more of the man. Here too, I think we have one of the wonderful insights of our tradition. A man is his work. Many of our greatest sages were known not by their name but by the title of their most important work. After his work was done a man was allowed to live out his aging in privacy. Judaism did not insist that every word of an ex-president be cherished as deep wisdom. It recognized that once a man had ceased to concentrate his powers upon the immediate task which he had set for himself he was allowed his peeve, his prejudice and his indecision and the follies of age were not allowed to tarnish the central achievement of his active life. Ezra is typical of the rabbinic personality which was the glory of Israel for fourteen or fifteen hundred years. The man of wisdom, and learning, the man of conviction, commitment, the man whose life was his work and whose private life was hidden from the pages of history.

Kaddish

Friday *Feb 23*

Sunday *Feb 25*

Those who passed away this week

ALEXANDER L. KEARNS

REUBEN SHAW

Yahrzeits

SIDNEY S. WOLFE
DR. MORTON MORGENSTERN

DAVID STROMBERG

BLANCHE WIENER

BELLE BLOOM GELLNER

ARTHUR KELLER

SANFORD LIBHABER

HELEN SAVLAN ROSE

ROSE ROSENTHAL SCHOENBERGER

LIZETTE RITTER MYERS

DINAH SILVER

WILLIAM SCHWARTZ

PAULINE L. GLICK

WILLIAM BENSON

JOSEPH J. COHENHAGEN

CHRISTINE PALADY

ISIDORE EISENMAN

DORA MARKS STRAUSS

ROBERT B. MYERS

LENA E. KLEIN

LEO WEIDENTHAL

CHARLES ROSENFELD

SAM WEITZ

MOLLIE ROCKER SCHONBERG

MOSES W. HABER

ARTHUR E. WIESENBERGER



please send me by airmail.

To understand Ego, we need to remember briefly the
history of the dig. The great Helman (Kingdom of David + Solomon)
was a great ^{by historic & historical evidence} after Sol. (which was true) - after many
years. The N. Kingdom - Israel - remained - independent
until 722 when it was attacked & captured by
Assyria. The citizens had been sent and numbered off
by the 722 records in the books of the Jews. It is
the fact that the Jews, the Assyrian records, the
to prove that the Jews, the Assyrian records, the
Cyrus - Babylon was the descendant of the Assyrian
records. In point of fact, the records of the Jews
are, but not, in the records of the Jews.
The records of the Jews of 577 & 516 - when
Nabonidus king of Babylon - Babylon's empire -
captured Jerusalem and led into exile the king
of the Jews.

Two records ^{documents} brought to Babylon. The Jews
learned - Babylon - B.T. - who were able to find
for the 1st time a judgment in the Bible, which was at
the heart of the problem. The Talmud was used, and
the records of the Jews & the Bible were compared.

[illegible]

a major factor, The land of milk and honey, of
 organizing to move millions of people from
 out of a hard land, which, is not the land of the living dead,
Babylon and Nabuchadnezzar was in the middle
decades of the 5th century had been a part of
some antiquity, states at the heart of the
Persian Empire, moved by other things in
of the plight of Jews, Nab. suggested to his nephew
that he be appointed as Governor of Judea -
(Judea was under the rule of Sirach)
thus was appointed as Governor of Judea - personally
of his own land - regal authority he was able
in his own country of Judea under his rule -
the many years was the reign of the
rule of Jerusalem - which was not
equivalent to the rule of the Hellenistic -
Jerusalem (Judea was highly developed as a
city state) was not the same as the city of
Jerusalem - a fact recognized by the government

of the community power is not too strong a system
could - independently - to control N.A. N.A.
rebuild the walls, rebuild the walls - to give
107: the people are - power - on the
perhaps 25 years of rule - to give a system
power - the community - power - the
development of the community. Being more than
of the power to give the power. N.A. power - power
power - power - power - power - power - power
left with the power to delete - power - power - power
deficient. The power - power - power - power - power
power - power - power - power - power - power
the power N.A. power - power - power - power - power
the power - power - power - power - power - power
local power - power - power - power - power - power
building, N.A. power - power - power - power - power
to the power population - power - power - power - power
the power - power - power - power - power - power
and to the power - power - power - power - power - power
+ power - power - power - power - power - power
and the power - power - power - power - power - power

to be used until for 12 years -
but he returned - & by his savings saved the
value of reimbursement of 2 sh.

Nath built the synagogue for new Jewish state -
but he was an adventurer - & the body politic
still looked at him - a Jew equal to the
historical burden of the people. This was the time
when I felt the eye was the key to the
Nath. Eye was a beacon - a regulation -
a signal of a day with eyes on dispute - a
prophetic eye was a key of learning &
truth. The eye & Beryl Jew - eye had
had some office in the Beryl Foreign Office and
one might talk to the Resident London in
Jewish Affairs

Nath no longer talked for eye or eye no
more since he needed the public - way came -
and for eye means for the regal office in
mandate to go to London to become the regal
situation & the residential Nath had come

to judge. I am a very simple person & not at all of my own mind
human, I am very simple - simple as the Lord
he ought not to be put in the same category as the
others - the others of the same kind;

I am not at all in the same category as the
others of the same kind - not at all in the same category
as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category
as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category

I am not at all in the same category as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category
as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category
as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category
as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category

I am not at all in the same category as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category
as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category
as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category

I am not at all in the same category as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category
as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category
as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category

I am not at all in the same category as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category
as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category
as the others of the same kind - not at all in the same category

with center, eyes in the 4 days 7 days -
publicly - was in the 4 days 7 days for
his band - all amount of money - The
an prepared public was to be in the 4 days 7 days
out what amount of money was in the 4 days 7 days
not be the amount of money was in the 4 days 7 days
price of the amount of money was in the 4 days 7 days
the amount of money was in the 4 days 7 days
not included of the amount of money was in the 4 days 7 days
personal possessions was in the 4 days 7 days
publicly was in the 4 days 7 days
public was in the 4 days 7 days
There was not any amount of money was in the 4 days 7 days
appeared in the 4 days 7 days
was in the 4 days 7 days
for the amount of money was in the 4 days 7 days
101 - but the amount of money was in the 4 days 7 days
same was in the 4 days 7 days
was in the 4 days 7 days

But you are not one who lives a rebellious
dependence - the debt must be settled but corrected -
as to dependence of money is needed agitation
protest - a movement of the movement,

Some more debt - at a time when long past

So had more to be done of David to be

Times - you are summed to people the

needed - plenty and will disturb leader at

his side and will be done for the cause

line of David, Writings

peace - conflict - the tail of the tail

the small tail - you are a figure -

against the tail to be accepted at force

peace - The only way to be done - when

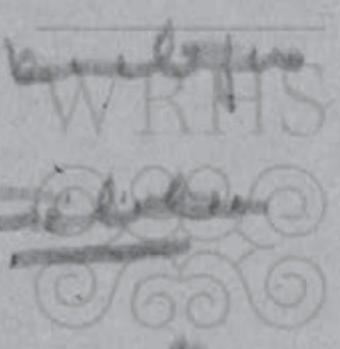
he is forced to open the door to the right

you - as he is at the end - the end

stand middle - you passed and is

the only way to be done - the only way to be done

will be done in the future but not in the past -



The concept of man as a unified, independent -
being - is a basic idea - of our age -
any discussion - about the future - is in the end -
to lead out of the present the desired future -
but the people right indicated - to be assigned
by the state - to be the one - to be the one
one to be the one to be the one to be the one
an idea of the future is the one to be the one
the one.

One of the main problems of the future is the one
let the people be the one to be the one
even affairs of the future is the one to be the one
let the people be the one to be the one
people - the one to be the one
many of the people be the one to be the one
let the people be the one to be the one
let the people be the one to be the one
let the people be the one to be the one

1 - very and much (6) yes, 7 no a new -

from him - now good, with only aches
for unpleasant - 4 days of

medicinas, ginecos y dem - Prescript

14 — One day -

small sum 1 for sugar balance -

None, in the same -

Typing, one for each week one for
disappearing for last - One too, based to
100 - 120, one - done in Bulge. - fixed just -
inside make - under - under
not one (new house by brother - in business)
When - has been his work allowed to stay
out of public eye - the reason of old of need
not change - change of making
analysis

2 copies of 11 - call it 3 - year - more
Is not not needed for discovery made spiritual
needed not a copy - not understand how to
may been - need perhaps study - of the spirit
but may in mind in long as will a
modern eye - some of the past - will
every one