



## 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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The Modern Jewish Mind II - Abraham Isaac Kook, 1981.



The Modern Jewish Mind II  
Abraham Isaak Kook  
Daniel Jeremy Silver  
March 1, 1981

If I had given you all a little sheet of paper this morning and asked you to identify for me Abraham Isaak Kook how many of you would be able to pass that very simple examination? As a matter of fact, I want to tell everyone here that I forgive everyone who came to me with the very bad play on words, you know, who is that kook you're going to talk about Sunday morning. Actually, Abraham Isaak Kook is one of the most neglected, obviously, but one of the most important of the thinkers of the twentieth century that our people have produced, and I chose to speak of him this morning because he suggests an approach, set of concerns, which might enliven and inspire traditional Judaism, orthodox Judaism if they were to adopt it.

Briefly, Abraham Isaak Kook, I keep repeating the whole name so that you will not forget it for the next five or ten years, was born in Latvia in 1865. He was born into a very ordinary, humble home, and he had the ordinary heder education, but like a few youngsters in every community he was known as an ilui which meant that he had a very special talent for learning, book learning, and probably a photographic mind, an ability to put Talmudic ideas together, and these kinds of young people were picked out from the various communities of our diaspora and they were specially trained here or there in the various grades of schooling available and then they were sent to one of the great yeshivot, one of the great seminaries, Talmudic seminaries of eastern Europe. In Kook's case he was sent to Veluzen where he received rabbinic ordination at a very very early age. He then went out and served in several small congregations along the Baltic and then he did something which was unusual for his time, probably the only really unusual thing in his biography, he left Europe, he made aliyah. He went to Palestine in the very first years of this century and he became the rabbi-in-residence in Jaffa which was then a largely Arab fishing village. He remained in Palestine until the first World War, that was a permanent settlement, but the war found him attending a conference in Europe, he was stranded by the war, and so he spent several years in London helping with the eastern European immigrant



community that had escaped there after the pogroms of Russia. In 1917 he returned to Palestine. In 1921 after the British received a mandate for Palestine and they wanted to organize the rabbinate, he was chosen to be the chief rabbi of the Ashkenozic, the European community, and he retained that task and that responsibility until he died in 1935. He was a world-famed Talmudic scholar. He was a traditionalist, a pietist, totally observant Jew. If any of us had been walking down a street in old Jerusalem in the twenties or the thirties and we had seen the men in their long black coats and fur-trimmed caps and long beards we would not have been able to distinguish Kook from any of those other traditional Jews who lived in that part of the world in that city. And yet, he was very different, and it's the difference that I want to suggest to you today and place before you. And perhaps the best way to do it is to suggest how Kook might have reacted to a longish advertisement which I saw in our Cleveland Jewish News this week. It ran for three half-pages. It was under the general title of The Bereaved Jew's Bill of Rights. It was a longish, longvilek I guess is the only word you could use to describe it, script written by some traditional burial society in New York which was designed to inform us that there was only one way, an orthodox halachic way, to organize a burial and a funeral. It emphasized the importance of not embalming the body. It emphasized the fact that Jews do not cremate. It emphasized the fact that there is not to be a vault outside<sup>of</sup> the pure wooden unnailed box which is to be the coffin, and went on and on in this way. And it was very angry in its tone about undertakers and elements in the Jewish community who encouraged any other form of burial. And I tried to imagine how Rav Kook would have read this advertisement.

He obviously would not have been opposed to its basic teaching. He opposed cremation. It was against the halacha. He believed in a simple wood coffin, that was the tradition. He opposed embalming, that was against the Jewish form. But there was also in this long advertisement a paragraph which claimed that the state was now infringing on the Jews' freedom of religion and what was our state, not our state, but what were these United States guilty of? We were guilty of the fact that we were now permitting doctors to declare someone dead on the basis of an electroencepholcgram,



on the basis of the lack of brain waves, so-called brain death. And this particular writer argued that it is totally against Jewish practice and against Jewish law to have any other sign of death but the cessation of the heart and of the lungs, and that anyone who declares someone dead on the basis of a brain scan of this kind violates the law and anyone so declared dead is in fact still alive and you can imagine the complications that flow from that.

Now, I suspect that if Kook had read this particular part of the advertisement he would have been non-plussed because in point of fact there is no unanimity among rabbinic authorities, traditional rabbinic authorities, that brain death is an impossible basis for the establishment of the condition of death. Obviously, the Talmud could not have considered an electroencephalogram. They hardly existed in the second century or the third century of the Common Era. And Kook was not one who closed his mind to the need of the tradition to adjust itself within the terms of its own integrity to the conditions of the time. Now, as you've heard again and again from orthodox men and women, the tradition has within itself a principle of interpretation very much like the juridic principles of interpretation of our own nation which would technically allow for change and for development to take place for adjustments of the tradition to new conditions of life. But in point of fact, ever since the Emancipation at the beginning of the nineteenth century, traditional authorities have been so frightened by change and by the pace of change and have been so aware of the fact that there are large groups of people who respond favorably to the idea that things are eternal, immutable, unchanging, that they are holding on to something fast while mankind is going down the slippery slope, that they have refused to make the simple adjustments, the openings, the permissive adjustments which might be possible as can be seen by anyone who knows the intricacies and the substance of our entire legal tradition.

Now, Harav Kook was not a man who objected to the new. He simply wanted to maintain the integrity of the old in relationship with the new. He said in one of his letters it is not for us to quarrel with the sages of the past but we are obliged



to add to their light. If at times we differ from their views, then he quoted from the Talmud, "each generation has its own sages and each generation has its own leaders." Traditional Judaism in the last two hundred years has for the most part been the same condition that Catholicism found itself in during the counter-reformation, really down to Vatican II, and that was in the position of being so afraid of all that was happening in the outside world that the drawbridges were pulled up, the walls were heightened and the old traditions were held on to with a rigidity which was not necessarily implicit, required by the tradition itself. Now, let me give you an example of this from Rav Kook's own life and one which has its own historical interest.

As you know, according to our Scripture life has a certain pattern to it, the Sabbath pattern. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath unto the Lord thy God. And just as there is a pattern during the weeks, six days of work and one day of rest, so there is a pattern of years. According to the Torah, six years you may sow your field and reap its harvest, but the seventh year you are to allow the harvest to lie fallow or to leave it for the poor. Now, this agricultural law which is repeated several times in our Torah was obviously part of a concerted attempt to adjust the pattern of life, days, weeks, months, the pattern of growth of agriculture, the pattern of commerce because there is also a law that you may engage in normal banking procedures during the six years of a cycle but the seventh year is a sabbatical year, all debts must be remitted, there is to be no lending during that year. All of life is to follow the divine pattern, the divine harmony. Now, this was not a particular burden for Jews during the long Middle Ages because all these laws are said in the Torah to apply when you go into the land which I have promised you. They are to apply only to Israel, only to the Promised Land, but what happened when the Zionist movement began and when Jews began to go back on the Holy Land. In 1889, which is really the very beginning of the yishuv, of the resettlement of the land, they were faced with the first of the sabbatical years, and traditional Jews found themselves besieged by a terrible problem. If they sowed



their fields that year and they reheaded harvest they could survive but they would be in violation of rabbinic law. If they abided by the rabbinic law their communities would go bankrupt because they were marginal communities. They lacked anything in their storehouses and in their barns. It was simply a matter of life or death. And so a small number of the orthodox rabbis who were in sympathy with the yishuv, with the new pioneers who had come back to settle the land issued what was called a heter, a document of permission, and they said there's a way around this. What we will do is to allow you to make a nominal sale of the land to a non-Jew and after the year you'll reclaim the land from that person, and since the law is only that if the land belongs to you that it must lie fallow you'll be able to sow and to reap during the sabbatical year. Well, this heter was issued by the few rabbis who were then in Palestine who were in sympathy with the settlements, but the traditionalist community, the besieged community was up in arms. Torah, God must know what He's doing, you must obey the Torah regardless of the issues of life. They'd forgotten the old Talmudic saying that the Torah is given to man, not man to the Torah, that law is given to man, not man to the law. And during the ensuing fourteen years a great amount of propaganda was developed throughout eastern Europe among the orthodox rabbinic leaders demanding that they issue a prohibition against this heter, against this system which allowed the Jews to get to sow and to plow regardless of the sabbatical year.

Now, it's interesting that they did so because two thousand years before one of the greatest of the rabbis of the rabbinic period, Hillel, had in fact done exactly this in regard to the commercial sides of the old sabbatical cycle. As Jews moved more and more into the Greek world and more and more into urban society, as normal banking procedures became more and more important in their businesses and in their commerce, the law which said that for six years you may lend money but all debts must be remitted on the seventh year became more and more a drawback to the orderly workings of the economy. The first year you might get money at a certain percentage; the closer you got to the seventh year the percentages went up; by the sixth year



money had become prohibitive and all business activities, really, were slowed to a stop. And so Hillel issued what the heter called a prosbul which did exactly the same thing. It essentially said put the ownership of the money in the hands of a corporation, a non-person, and then the debt does not have to be remitted. All the rabbis of the late nineteenth century were trying to do <sup>to do</sup> was the same thing for the agricultural laws, but those who saw only the law were scared of change, were aghast and angered, and they began in this campaign of vilification, they tried to pressure the settlements, the believers who were in the settlements, not to sow and to reap the harvest or to care for their fields during the sabbatical year. They threatened to withdraw funds from them, to go up and down the cities of Europe and to tell the people not to send money to Palestine which would allow these people to buy the implements and the grain that they needed. It was an ugly scene.

Well, by this time Rav Kook had come to Jaffa, he was in place, and he used all of his moral authority in order to give to the settlers who were on the land who were concerned about observance and concerned about survival the permission to use the heter. He, in a sense, gambled the respect in which he was held by the orthodox community, he allowed his person to stand as an authority to whom they could turn and whom they could trust. And they did. They did sow their fields and plow them, but it's interesting that the diehards have not yet given up, and you can find still in Israel today large numbers of traditional people, traditional rabbis, who argue that the land must not be sowed, that this is a violation of God's will, that Israel is a scandalous nation, atheist nation, because it allows the normal processes of agriculture to go on despite the Torah law.

What I am suggesting is, in the first instance, that Rav Kook was not a letter-of-the-law man. He was not afraid of modern times, and that's been rare among the orthodox in this last century. As a matter of fact, he felt that most of his colleagues, the orthodox rabbis with whom he worked and who lived the same kind of life he did, he accused them of negativism. He accused them of being too much involved in technique, in the purely technical sides of Jewish life and too little



involved with the religious sides of the life. He said this - our most talented people have concentrated on the practical aspects of the Torah, the emotional aspects, and more than this, the philosophic aspects, more than this that which is beyond all of this, the illumination of holiness, all that bears within itself the mystery of redemption. This they have abandoned in their narrow preoccupations.

Here is an orthodox rabbi, a Talmudic scholar of known competence and brilliance, who argues that there was a kind of chain of confinement, to use his word, that the rabbis of his day were chained to concerns of practice, is something kosher, is it traith, these kinds of issues, when the real issues were to see if one could not unfold the sense of possibility, the sense of holiness in the individual person, in the congregation, in the Jewish state, among the Jewish people, and that's an unusual stance for a man of his time and of his place and he spent more time fighting the orthodox rabbinate than he did fighting anyone else. Because they know they could not accuse him of piety or of lack of scholarship, they could not understand his understanding of the new world, new ideas, new books, even his understanding, and this was to them scandalous, of those atheistic settlers who came in their short clothes, men and women working together who came to settle in the communities, the agricultural communities, the communist agricultural communities of the yishuv.

While his colleagues were hurling ex-communications and anathmas and curses against these people who had no modesty, who talked of free love, of men and women, look at them, teenagers beyond the age of puberty working together in the field, doing the same task, long-haired, look at these terrible people who have come. Rav Kook said, yes, look at them, and see the sense of idealism which has brought them here. And notice this fact, that they are committed to much that is good and is kindly. It's far better for us to try to draw them to us than to hurl stones at them, a phrase of his. Let's try to understand them and let's recognize that if we set an example which is attractive to them, they have come to a Jewish state, they are here to reestablish the land, they will be drawn to a Jewish way of life if there's anything attractive in that life, if we represent something that's compelling,



of a compelling nature to them. To Rav Kook the tragedy was that all his colleagues were concerned about was the maintenance of every jot and tittle of the medieval way of life, that they were unwilling to see the possibility implicit in any new idea, in any new technique in the new settlers of the new land. They were scandalized that the messianic age should begin with and depend upon the sweat and the tears of young agnostics. And he said to them, God works in mysterious ways, there is good in everything, learn to see, look for the good, don't look for what you disapprove, look for the good, look for the possibility, look for decency. And that was his way.

Rav Kook was a mystic. He was a poet. He is the first of rabbinic writers since Hillel to describe his own mystical experiences in an effective way. He was a man who was concerned with the spirit. He was a kabbalist in the traditional sense of the word, that is to say, he believed that a creation, some kind of great tragedy had taken place and all kinds of divisions had taken place in the world, and it was the purpose of the religious man and the religious woman to draw these divisions together to heal that which separates us and to bring us back into the single unity, the yihud, the oneness which lies at the very center and the very mystery of the Jewish mission. And so he said this: all the defects of the world - material and spiritual - derive from the fact that everyone sees only the aspect of existence which pleases him and all other aspects seem to deserve to be purged from the earth. We end up believing that whatever is outside our experience is destructive and disturbing, and the result of all this is the multiplication of conflict.

There is in orthodox Judaism as it has been practiced in the nineteenth and twentieth century a Jewish version of the moral majority, a desire to impose upon the rest of the community their way. I've been amused by the anger of many against the moral majority in claiming that it is, in fact, not Jewish in its approach. In fact, it is completely Jewish in an orthodox sense. It is the assumption that there is a mandated way and it is man's obligation to conform to the way and those that do not conform as in the old pilgrim and puritan societies of New England must simply be coerced, brought under by force, by obligation, by coercion in any way that one can.



Now, this was not Rav Kook's way. He believed in harmony. As you can see in his attitude towards the settlers who lived around him, he believed in seeing the possibility of every moment, the possibility of every situation. He was the most complete optimist I've ever read. Could you agree with this? Everything in life ascends, nothing descends; everything in life develops, nothing ever retreats. One who believes in redemption, one who believes that life is on its way to some final consummation has the sense that everything has a purpose to it if we can only uncover that purpose. If we could only bind together the disparate communities of mankind we can hasten that ultimate day, that ultimate consummation along. And so out of a deep and profound faith in the redemptive power of God and the fact that God has made redemption implicit in the universe itself, wherever he faced a human situation Kook had the ability to look for the possibility in the moment, not to condemn, not to decry, but to seek to understand and to seek to reconcile.

He looked at the orthodox leadership of his day and he said, the problem with you essentially is you're not religious. You're dealing with lawyers, with practice. You're dealing as lawyers with structure. That's not what this generation needs. This generation should come to God's Torah because it is God's will, but that's not the way. If you make it clear through the quality of your life that holiness radiates through you, that you have achieved peace of mind, a sense of dignity, a sense of compassion, an empathy for other human beings because of your practice you will draw people to it, but simply to belabor the point, to pound the pulpit, to hurl curses at these people who do not agree with you, this is not the way to go.

He looked at the pioneers, the young whose lives were so different than anything he knew. You've got to remember that he came from a world in which a rabbi never talked directly to a woman, in which men and women lived in totally separate spheres, in which the idea of young people in short pants working together in the field was absolutely scandalous, yet, somehow he had the faith to leap over this cultural division and to see that though he saw much in their lives which he questioned, many



things which he, of course, would have done differently, he saw the sense of justice, the burning concern for a better world which had brought these people to the Holy Land, and he said if only we can make them sense what is lacking yet in their lives, what fine converts we'll have. There's a sense of the holiness in everything. Let's break open the shell. When you attack something you only harden a person's defense, you harden the shell against them. By love and by understanding and, most important, by the compelling example of your life you can sometimes allow them to break out of their own sense of separation, their own sense of distinction, that their way is the right way and make them recognize that there is more to life than even they recognize up till now.

He was a fine man and a noble spirit, and I'd like to read to you one of the very beautiful little paragraphs that he wrote which has to do with faith is a song, a four-fold song. He said:

There is one who sings the song of his own life, and in himself he finds everything, his full spiritual satisfaction.

There is another who sings the song of his people. He leaves the circle of his own self, because he finds it without sufficient breadth, without an idealistic basis. He aspires toward the heights, and he attaches himself with a gentle love to the whole community of Israel. Together with her he sings her songs. He feels grieved in her afflictions and delights in her hopes. He contemplates noble and pure thoughts about her past and her future, and probes with love and wisdom her inner spiritual essence.

There is another who reaches toward more distant realms, and he goes beyond the boundary of Israel to sing the song of mankind. His spirit extends to the wider vistas of the majesty of man generally, and his noble essence. He aspires toward man's general goal and looks forward toward his higher perfection. From this source of life he draws



the substance of his meditation and study, his aspirations and his visions.

Then there is one who rises toward wider horizons, until he links himself with all existence, with all God's creatures, with all worlds, and he sings his song with all of them. It is of one such as this that tradition has said that whoever sings a portion of song each day is assured of having a share in the world to come.

And then there is one who rises with all these songs, with the fourfold songs and binds them together in one ensemble. They all join their voices. Together they sing their songs with beauty, each one lends vitality and life to the other. They are sounds of joy and gladness, sounds of jubilation and celebration, sounds of ecstasy and holiness.

The song of the self, the song of the people, the song of mankind, the song of the world all merge in him at all times, in every hour.

And this full comprehensiveness rises to become the song of holiness, the song of God, the song of Israel, in its strength and beauty, in its full authenticity and greatness. Indeed, there are people who say that Israel, the name, stands for shir el, the song of God. So come and sing with me the fourfold song.

Now a man who can sing these kinds of songs, whose heart is attuned, sensitively attuned to the potential goodness in others, who tries to understand before he condemns, whose life is devoted to bringing harmony rather than disunity into a family, into the household of Israel, and between the nations and between the religions of mankind, a man who comes from out of the depths of the rabbinic world and remains throughout his life one of its guiding lights and spirits. Such a man suggests in his person the reach and the possibility and the sensitivity of which our traditional rabbinic Judaism is capable. But unfortunately, while he was chief rabbi of Israel he spent more time fighting the other rabbis of Israel than he did



being able to lead in the way that he suggests. He fought with love. They fought with curses. And unfortunately, if you look at the traditional rabbinate in the old city of Jerusalem you'll find people today who act as if this man never lived among them, whose concerns are with limiting the rights of autopsy or with some other narrow halachic issue, who worry not very much about the moral quality of their lives or of the lives of the congregations they lead. There has developed among them a term by which they describe themselves and which is called Torah-true. The very words suggest the emphasis that they place on the difference, the distinction between their practice and all others. They are the Torah-true, so presumably all others are the Torah untrue, and by Torah they do not mean holiness; they mean concerns about the dietary laws, they mean concerns about the specific ways in which a holiday is observed, they mean anathemas hurled at all those within the household of Israel who do not see it this way. This element within orthodoxy which has, unfortunately, been dominant, at least among its hierarchy, has turned a traditional size of our faith into a purely ritualistic concern which tends, as Kook said, to be totally negativistic and to be concerned with form and not substance. And as long as orthodoxy remains frozen in this mold, so long for most will it not be at all compelling because it is not for many of us, and for most of mankind today, it is not the ritual that is important but righteousness, and not the ceremony that's important but compassion and not the specifics of the law but can we find a measure of holiness in our lives through a particular form of our religious life.

There are a few in orthodoxy who follow the lead which Rav Kook set for them, but not many, but here is the possibility of that element of our tradition in all of its beauty and I commend him to you as a saint in Israel, as a mystic worth the reading, and as a man who suggests that had our tradition remained true to its essential spirit it might have found a way to unfold the sense of holiness which is so precious to all of us without so many of us of having to break so radically with the past in order to turn a way of life into a religious way of life.







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THE HEBREW JERUSALEM  
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# Kaddish

Friday

Sunday

MAR. 1

## Those who passed away this week

SAMUEL M. ROSENFELD

ISABEL FRANKFORT

ABE M. LUNTZ

## Yahrzeit

DR. JOSEPH SCHWARTZBERG

JOSEPH J. COPENHAGEN

DORA MARKS STRAUSS

ROBERT B. MYERS

LENA E. KLEIN

SAM WEITZ

MOLLIE ROCKER SCHONBERG

MOSES W. HABER

CHARLES ROSENFELD

ARTHUR E. WIESENBERGER

MAX EMERLING

ARTHUR A. NEIGER

SARAH STERN

JACK W. HELLER

SIDONIA K. KORACH

HERMAN GIMP

SAMUEL WEISS

HARRY H. KOZMAN

DR. HERMAN C. SMITH

DR. IRWIN E. YOELSON

MINNETTE S. LIEBENTHAL

RUTH G. KLAUS

PHILIP LESTER STERN

HERMAN LEFFERT

SIDNEY B. ROSENBAUM

DR. HENRY B. STEUER

HERMAN KEMPNER

HILDA K. REICH

HERMAN J. REICH

*DR. BOON SCHWARTZBERG*



# YOUR TEMPLE CALENDAR – *Clip and Save*

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
<b>22</b> <b>FEBRUARY</b> <b>SERVICES</b> 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver will speak on <b>THE MODERN JEWISH MIND</b> / AHAD HA-AM	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> TWA Activities 10:00 a.m. - Branch Fellowship & Study Group Rabbi Stephen Klein 10:30 a.m. - Branch	<b>25</b> "WHAT'S LEFT OF ANTI-SEMITISM?" Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver 8:15 p.m. - Branch	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b> Services - 5:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel	<b>28</b> Shabbat Services 11:15 a.m. - Branch Bat Mitzvah <b>JULIE MANN</b> 11:00 a.m. The Temple Chapel
<b>1</b> <b>MARCH</b> <b>SERVICES</b> 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver will speak on <b>// ABRAHAM ISAAK KOOK</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b> TWA <b>FIRST TUESDAY</b> 11:00 a.m. - Shop & Socialize 12:00 noon - Lunch 1:00 p.m. - Dick Dugan Fellowship & Study Group Rabbi Stephen Klein 10:30 a.m. - Branch <b>LUNCH WITH THE RABBI</b> Cleveland Civic House 12:00 noon - 1:30 p.m. Mr. & Mrs. Club Board Meeting 8:00 p.m.	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b> Services - 5:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel <b>FIRST FRIDAY</b> Dr. Robert Jastrow 8:15 p.m. - Branch	<b>7</b> Shabbat Services 11:15 a.m. - Branch Bar Mitzvah <b>JONATHAN GILL</b> 11:00 a.m. The Temple Chapel
<b>8</b> <b>SERVICES</b> 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch Conducted by The Temple Men's Club	<b>9</b> <b>TMC ADULT EDUCATION</b> The Ten Commandments Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver 7:45 p.m. - Branch	<b>10</b> TWA Activities 10:00 a.m. - Branch Fellowship & Study Group Rabbi Stephen Klein 10:30 a.m. - Branch Temple Board Meeting 8:00 p.m. - Branch	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Services - 5:30 p.m. The Temple Chapel	<b>14</b> Shabbat Services 11:15 a.m. - Branch Bat Mitzvah <b>LAURIA GREEN</b> 11:00 a.m. The Temple Chapel
<b>15</b> <b>SERVICES</b> 10:30 a.m. The Temple Branch Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver will speak	<b>16</b> <b>TMC ADULT EDUCATION</b> Moses the Lawgiver Rabbi Paul Joseph 7:45 p.m. - Branch	<b>17</b> TWA Activities 10:00 a.m. - Branch Fellowship & Study Group Rabbi Stephen Klein 10:30 a.m. - Branch Religious School Board Meeting 7:45 - Study Group 8:15 - Meeting Branch	<b>18</b> TWA Board Meeting 10:00 a.m. - Branch	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b> Purim Services - 5:30 p.m. The Temple Chappel <b>SEVENTH SABBATH</b> 8:00 p.m. - Branch	<b>21</b> Shabbat Services 11:15 a.m. - Branch



A wonderful vital force is hidden in the heart of each Jew, which impels him to attach himself to his people, whose life stream flows within him. This subconscious impulse makes him share the powerful yearning for the pure and uplifting light of truth and divine equity, a yearning that is bound to be realized some day in actual life.

The Jewish precepts, practices and customs are the vessels which contain a few sparks from the great light from above. The vital force of the Torah will do its work in the innermost being of him who clings to its precepts, even though that person remains unaware of its operation. The moment a man desires to have a share in the spirit of Israel, the divine spirit enters his aspirations, even in spite of himself. All the possessions of Israel are suffused with the indwelling spirit of God: its land, its language, its history and its customs.

Prayer is an absolute necessity for us and for the whole world; it is also the most sacred kind of joy. The waves of our soul beat ceaselessly on the shores of consciousness. We desire of ourselves and of the whole world the kind of perfection that the limitation of existence renders impossible. In our despair and frustration we are likely to turn against our better judgment and against our Creator. But before this cancer of the spirit has had time enough to grow in our midst, we come to pray. We give utterance to our thoughts and are uplifted to a world of perfect existence. Thus our inner world is rendered perfect in truth, and restful joy fills our consciousness.

Every plant and bush, every grain of sand and clod of earth, everything in which life is revealed or hidden, the smallest and the biggest in creation—all longs and yearns and reaches out toward its celestial source. And at every moment, all these cravings are gathered up and absorbed by man, who is himself lifted up by the longing for holiness within him. It is during prayer that all these pent-up desires and yearning are released. Through his prayer, man unites in himself all being, and lifts all creation up to the fountainhead of blessing and life.

Every sin brings about a particular type of trembling in the soul (which does not cease until repentance has been made). It is

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Everything ascends, — Nothing descends  
i. develops — " Rebirths

They are here for the improvement of society, because of  
an inner inclination towards goodness and kindness  
we should not then stare at so-called them —

The inner essence, kedusha, hiddur hidden in them <sup>treasures</sup>

actual allegory of negotiation in

They have abandoned the <sup>soul</sup> ~~body~~ of the Torah

\* All the defects of the <sup>world</sup> ~~cosmos~~ — material and spiritual —  
derive from the fact that everyone sees only the aspect of  
existence which pleases him and all other aspects seem to  
be absent or separated from the earth, we end up believing that  
whatever is outside <sup>our</sup> ~~the~~ experience is destructive and  
disturbing — the result of all this is the multiplication of  
conflict —



*whole* people, only with the all-embracing whole, in all its fullness and good.

Vol. II, pp. 456-457.

## A Fourfold Song

There is one who sings the song of his own life, and in himself he finds everything, his full spiritual satisfaction.

There is another who sings the song of his people. He leaves the circle of his own individual self, because he finds it without sufficient breadth, without an idealistic basis. He aspires toward the heights, and he attaches himself with a gentle love to the whole community of Israel. Together with her he sings her songs. He feels grieved in her afflictions and delights in her hopes. He contemplates noble and pure thoughts about her past and her future, and probes with love and wisdom her inner spiritual essence.

There is another who reaches toward more distant realms, and he goes beyond the boundary of Israel to sing the song of man. His spirit extends to the wider vistas of the majesty of man generally, and his noble essence. He aspires toward man's general goal and looks forward toward his higher perfection. From this source of life he draws the subjects of his meditation and study, his aspirations and his visions.

Then there is one who rises toward wider horizons, until he links himself with all existence, with all God's creatures, with all worlds, and he sings his song with all of them. It is of one such as this that tradition has said that whoever sings a portion of song each day is assured of having a share in the world to come.

And then there is one who rises with all these songs in one ensemble, and they all join their voices. Together they sing their songs with beauty, each one lends vitality and life to the other. They are sounds of joy and gladness, sounds of jubilation and celebration, sounds of ecstasy and holiness.



The song of the self, the song of the people, the song of man, the song of the world all merge in him at all times, in every hour.

And this full comprehensiveness rises to become the song of holiness, the song of God, the song of Israel, in its full strength and beauty, in its full authenticity and greatness. The name "Israel" stands for *shir el*,<sup>9</sup> the song of God. It is a simple song, a twofold song, a threefold song and a fourfold song. It is the Song of Songs of Solomon, *shlomo*, which means peace or wholeness. It is the song of the King in whom is wholeness.

Vol. II, pp. 458-459.

### Constant Renewal

The perception that dawns on a person to see the world not as finished, but as in the process of continued becoming, ascending, developing—this changes him from being "under the sun" to being "above the sun," from the place where there is nothing new to the place where there is nothing old, where everything takes on new form. The joy of heaven and earth abides in him as on the day they were created.

In this luminous perspective one looks at all the worlds, at the general and the human development, at the destiny of each creature, at all the events of all times.

The time that is an uninterrupted Sabbath<sup>10</sup> on which eternal peace shines, is the day when, by the nature of its creation, there pulsates a continued thrust for newness. It needs no end, no termination. It is the choicest of days, an ornament of beauty, the source of all blessings.

Vol. II, p. 535.

9. The Hebrew name for Israel is a composite of the two Hebrew words *shir el*, the song of God. The identification of Solomon in the Song of Songs with God and the correspondence of God's four-letter name with the four levels of song is found in Zohar III 27b; Tikkune Zohar 10, 13; Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1:11; and in other sources.

10. An allusion to the messianic age.