



## 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  
62

Box  
20

Folder  
1250

Looking Back on a Hard Year, 1983.



Looking Back On A Hard Year  
Daniel Jeremy Silver  
May 8, 1983

Over the last several weeks we have read and heard with sadness, but not with surprise, the conclusion of the report of a national commission which investigated the state of instruction in our American schools. Our schools seemed increasingly unable to teach the basic mechanical and mental skills which the young people of America require for economic survival in our complicated world.

I know I was shocked to read that 13 percent of those who graduate from high school are functionally illiterate: unable to form letters into words, words into sentences, and to make sense out of the completed phrases. As one who has been a teacher all of his life I know that literacy measures little more than a mechanical skill - the ability to form words and read sentences. Literacy is not a measure of comprehension. Indeed, when we examine our students' mastery of the art of reading we find that a minority of those who graduate from our high schools can comprehend more than the simplest sentence.

When Thoreau was spending his years reading beside Walden pond, he observed "that books must be read as deliberately and as reservedly as they are written." Fifteen hundred years before Thoreau and Walden our sages, the rabbis, said that the meaning of a text of a great piece of literature lies deep within the text and it must be mined with care and perseverance the same way we have to mine precious metal. Unfortunately, I suspect that most Americans have not mastered the skill of mining good literature for its deeper meaning. Consider the chapter from the Book of Genesis that I read to you this morning. There are millions of so-called literate people who misread and continue to misunderstand its meaning. I speak as much of careless reading as pious literalists, of many who consider themselves informed and sophisticated. At some time or other they decide to pick up the Bible to see what it is all about. It's natural to begin at the beginning, so they read this chapter which describes creation and they quickly put the Bible down. Why bother with a book filled with such unscientific nonsense. The world wasn't created in six days or in six distinct stages. I don't need to be bothered with



a book which is nothing more than a presentation of some primitive pseudo-science.

On the other side of the coin we have those pious literalists who insist on the facticity of this description of creation because this chapter appears in a book which people call Holy Scripture. They believe each line to be God's word and insist that despite all the knowledge astrophysics and paleoanthropology have provided about the big bang and evolution, this chapter must be read literally. Some even insist that our schools must be required to teach Genesis I in science classes on an equal basis with scientific theories of the beginning. A sensitive reading of Genesis One makes it clear that its purpose is not that of scientific description. When Genesis was edited there were no scientists as we know them and no scientific literature as we know that genre. Genesis One is myth, not a research paper. Genesis One is a highly formed, carefully shaped, introduction to the literature we now call Scripture and not the only prologue. Actually, Genesis One is a second beginning to the sacred literature of ancient Israel. The beginning, the original beginning of our sacred history appears in Chapter 2 of Genesis: "When the Lord God made heaven and earth, when no shrub in the field was yet on earth, and no grass in the field had yet sprouted because the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till the soil, but a flow would well up from the ground and water the whole surface of the earth. The Lord formed a man from the dust of the earth, he blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. This second beginning dismisses creation with a single phrase: "When the Lord God made heaven and earth" and we have simply a few skimpy descriptions of early life, a time when there was no vegetation until the flow comes up from under the earth and then growth begins to appear and, finally, God makes man. I can imagine a priest poet in the 6th or 5th centuries B.C.E. listening to this introduction and deciding that it was not of sufficient stature or scope or profundity for its exalted position, so he set out to write another beginning.



This sensitive spirit must have felt that a tradition as grand and as wise as the Jewish tradition required a nobler beginning and so he composed the 33 verses I read to you this morning. The verses were shaped and formed in high style. Its reiterations and the clear and succinct divisions into days, each with its own specific purpose, underlines the crucial theme that creation was not, is not, an aimless exercise. We live in a cosmos, a shaped, purposeful world, not in chaos, a world whose existence is the result of chance. Our existence, our cosmos, is formed, which meant that there is meaning, harmony and symmetry to life. The Lord God found emptiness and formed it. He fought darkness upon the face of the earth and said, "let there be light." He took the random and gave it form. Genesis One is a chapter where style and substance support and reinforce each other.

Our sage gave Israel's saga of beginning a theme. God is Creator and His creation conforms to God's wisdom and plan. In a sense all that follows in scripture is a variation of that single theme. It is a grand beginning and, like all great pieces of literature, Genesis One speaks to us on many levels. When it was first written Genesis One reminded the writer's contemporaries that man must live in harmony with God; the ancients took this sense of harmony quite literally. There were Greek philosophers of the classic period who taught that God had created the universe according to certain classic proportions. The various parts of creation maintained a fixed mathematical relationship and these various relationships were the standard of perfection for man as well as for the universe. The ancient's architects built their temples, palaces and great public buildings in conformity with these mathematical ratios, and their construction provided the citizenry with a textbook of perfect harmony, a visual reminder of the harmonies which ought to be built into their own lives.

Greece understood harmony in its way; in ancient Israel in its way. God was the pattern after whom man and woman should pattern themselves. "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." God was the model, His virtues were the model after which we should pattern our lives. When Moses is on Mount Sinai we



are informed that Moses asks God for some understanding of His nature. God has given the Covenant, the Law, the prescriptions; but now man wants to know more about the nature of God. The text reads that God responds by telling Moses, "turn your face to the rock and I will make all my goodness pass behind you." After this occurs Moses speaks of a new understanding of God and to this day use his words when we take the Torah out of the Ark: "The Lord, the Lord God, long full of justice and mercy, long suffering, abundant in goodness, and ever true." Here is the pattern. Here are the moral standards after which we are to pattern our lives.

[ I speak of Genesis this morning because I found this past year to be a hard year during which I found myself time and again opening the Bible to this grand opening chapter and finding here encouragement, a reason to persevere, a faith against a gnawing fear that life was getting out of hand. I don't want to describe at any length this morning the problems of our age. They are well known and they are great.] One out of every ten of our fellow citizens was out of work. We have had to recognize that many of these will never be able to be employed again in those jobs which they had held. Technological unemployment has spread across the land. We have moved from an era where industry rewarded brawn to an era where industry requires brains - highly technical skills - and that is why the failure of our school systems is tragic to an unprecedented degree. The illiterate and semi-literate cannot make out in today's marketplace. We have watched as the economic divisions between those people and countries who have and those who have not have widened. The poorer countries have fallen deeply into debt and there seems no remedy. Fiscal restraint will mean that they will abort economic development. Fiscal irresponsibility will mean bankruptcy. Instead of our hope for a world moving toward greater abundance, stringency seems to be the order of the day. In spite of feelings we have control over life, life seemed to be increasingly out of control. The 18th century described economics as a dismal science, the science which describes how not enough was to be divided among too many, and in our country we have relearned the aptness of that description. Beyond this



there were the usual number of wars, revolutions, terrorist acts and random violence; the now familiar, seemingly irresolvable, tensions in Latin America, Ireland, Southeast Asia and the Middle East which have plagued our world for lo these past years.

[ If you believe as I do that what happens to the Jewish people is, in many ways, a litmus paper test of what is happening in the larger world then you have sensed in your bones just how hard and difficult a year this has been. This was the year of the Lebanon. This was the year in which Israel was savaged in the media. This year many of us sensed again that the fire of ancient prejudices were burning just under the surface. We began to wonder if we should mount a volcanic watch.

As I said, I found myself turning to the first chapter of Genesis for reassurance and encouragement. I found there a truth the ancient teachers gave more readily to their people than we do. In the ancient world there was little reason for romantic illusion. Men and women were constantly faced with danger and the central line of their moralists was not to give in to self-pity. Zeno, who founded the Stoic school of philosophy, the most popular of the Greek philosophies in the post-classical age, taught that we cannot master life. We are born with limited capacities. We are born mortal. Our lives are subject to accidents of all kinds. We cannot guarantee how long we will live or whether we will be able to develop or to use our talents or whether the world will appreciate our talents or whether we will suddenly be cut down by one of those sweeping plagues which periodically wiped out whole cities or whether our children would live through childhood or our lives would survive childbirth. Life was clearly out of control - out of man's control. Zeno, and those who thought as he did, insisted on restraint. You cannot control life, they said, so do not expect much of life. Learn not to be disappointed when life turns against you. The trick in life is to live with what nobility and courage you can muster, without caring too deeply about the accidents which affect our existence. Self-discipline, self-control, restraint, not wanting too much or hoping for too much, these are the keys to a life which can survive



and surmount the inevitable hard knocks.

The great religions of antiquity tend to describe life as a vale of tears and a time of trial. They saw man as a plaything of the gods rather than as master of his fate. Each religion developed its own metaphor, but in each case the metaphor signals that life is too much for the individual human. We are not to expect much from life. We must learn to live without caring too deeply or wanting too much for it is in the higher over-expectation, the greater our disappointment. Frustration hurts in direct proportion to our hopes. There is a certain nobility in courage and self-discipline. Our modern equivalent to stoicism is the proverb: 'when the going gets tough the tough get going'. But you'll admit that coping is a gray philosophy which holds out little hope and constricts the spirit. The stoic view also fails to provide us any sense of direction. Self-control is an internal discipline, not an agenda for life. If I'm to be bough or I should get going, where am I to go? What plans should I make? The stoicks were, for the most part, upper-class men who used their power to protect themselves as best they could. In many ways stoicism provided them a conventional rationale to avoid commitment and caring. Stoicism is ultimately a philosophy of self-involvement. In times of trouble we are advised to pull up the drawbridge and retreat to our lair so as to be able to withstand the seige. We're not to expose ourselves. It's not surprising then that as times have gotten tough, many of us have become more and more self-centered. This is a "me" generation, concerned with itself rather than the common weal. We worry about America's economy, but not necessarily about the economies of the rest of the world. We worry about our taxes, but not about those who have been thrown out of work. The times cry out for a caring citizenship and we're trying to protect what we have.

When I turn to Genesis One I find a different approach: faith in life's possibility. God did not place us in a world which is too much for us. God is not playing sadistic games with us. God did not create us inadequate to the challenges we face. Our talents are limited but not inadequate. I find in Genesis



One a view of an orderly cosmos and a good and fertile earth. I find a description of creation which conforms to God's wisdom, a cosmos, not a chaos. After each day of creation there is the refrain: "God saw that which He had done and that it was good." When man is created man's potential is underscored: "God saw what he had made and he saw that it was very good." Man is to be master of all that lives on earth.

Central to our faith is the principle that Genesis One enunciates that life is not out of control. God did not put us here as we sometimes put rats or mice in a cage in order to test their reaction to extreme stress. The earth is not an inadequate space but God's earth, a goodly place. There is enough for us if we manage our affairs wisely and act as careful stewards of all that God has given to us.

Why then do we sometimes feel that life is out of control? We've all at times felt overwhelmed. The headlines reflect some frightening realities and possibilities. There are all those nuclear warheads, each one capable of destroying millions of lives. We seem not to be able to do anything about the threat of a holocaust. The true and present danger of atomic war - nuclear war - is equally true and present in the areas of overpopulation, pollution, unemployment. We don't know how to employ four billion earthlings constructively. We don't know how to educate one billion children effectively. We don't know how to leave room on earth for another generation. We don't know how to manage production without destroying the promise of future generations. We feel overwhelmed, at least I sometimes do, and when I do I find it healing to touch base with Genesis I and its message that life has meaning and possibility, a possibility and a meaning God put there. Genesis I reminds me that if I can't work out a solution to the problems of nuclear disarmament or technological unemployment or of any of the other problems of our world which concern me. It is not because these problems lack solutions but because I'm man, not God. I'm trying to solve these problems which have developed over the ages with limited capacities in too brief a time.



Genesis I reminds me of the importance of faith, to persevere however confusing I may find the moment. Genesis I reminds us that we do not need to describe quick and final solutions. Our problems are not the creation of yesterday. Man has been making war with his fellow man since the cavemen fought with one another. The problems which we face are overwhelming because we have allowed them to grow to elephantine proportion. Given our recent history, to beware of all quick and final solutions, what we need to do is to do what we can, to take a single step, to work at a single problem, to do our share having faith in the decency and capacity of others.

There is a line in the Sayings to the Fathers, a famous line which I have repeated to you before: "yours to complete the work, but neither are you a free man to desist from it." Those of little faith tend to abandon all concerns save those which involve their own safety when they cannot devise quick, simple solutions. A tragic position. If our world takes this stance we have little, if any, chance of surviving, and our worst fears will come true. But if each of us acts with faith, with the faith of Genesis I that God's creation is full of possibility and that there are others of His creatures like us who care and who are concerned, a human being can truly master himself. We will take a useful step, whatever it be, towards making this life a better life for ourselves and others. We will present the next generation and the next a world whose problems are not out of hand.

I presented to you several years ago a brief history of the messianic hopes of our people. I would like to review my conclusions briefly now because I feel our faith can provide not only a helpful perspective but that it can help us keep our balance and our sanity in these stressful times. If our world becomes sun-filled this faith will be no less healing. If, as I believe, dark headlines will continue to head our daily life, this faith can help us persevere. I am convinced that as long as we live, as long as our children and grandchildren live, human beings will have to struggle with accumulated problems of the past and the usual greed, ambition and carelessness of earthlings. I also believe that if we serve



others beside ourselves we can dilute a bit the burdens which weary us and lighten the future for our children.

In the early days of our faith our hopes rested with God. In times of trouble God would intervene. Like a good witch of the south He would wave a magic wand and a miracle would occur or the Messiah would come and set the world right. Israel held on to this hope during the long childhood of the human race. When we became adolescents about a hundred years ago and began to sense strength and capacity, our ability to master the earth and live with some ease and dignity, we threw out miracles and the messiah and placed unbounded faith in ourselves. We ceased to speak of the messiah and spoke of the messianic age which we were creating. We would have a limited time of peace, plenty and prosperity. With our new science and technology, all that was required was will and application. After all, couldn't we see that Pollyanna was right when she said that every day in every way the world was getting better and better.

Then we bumped into reality and learned that we were not going to be able to manufacture paradise. Some began to wonder if we were not manufacturing hell. There was the first World War when the so-called civilized countries of Europe destroyed their best and brightest in a pointless bloodletting. There were the cruelties of the old tyrannies and the new revolutionaries. Sixty million died during the second World War. Nineteen eighty-four became a vision of hell.

Most abandoned the adolescent faith in the messianic age and went so far as to give up all hope. Others returned to the faith of childhood. What is there for those of us who accept adulthood, frustration and anxiety - are we to live without hope? It's as an adult and a modern that I turn to Genesis I, "and God saw all that He had made and behold it was good" - and to God's command to man and master the earth. Here is the faith not in a messiah nor in a messianic age but in the messianic journey. The messianic journey can be followed by people of good will, wisdom, of courage, and of faith. It's a journey with a purpose but without a fixed destination. The messianic journey will take each of us into the market-



place and the political arena, all kinds of relationships where we are part of the actions of our times. Its message is do what you can but don't expect to solve all mankind's problems. You cannot bring about paradise on earth, many of your plans will be frustrated. Accept the rabbis' bald statement that the righteous are not rewarded in this life. Recognize that there is work to be done and no one else do to, that you must serve because of the faith that God wills us to do the right and, ultimately, will support and establish our work. That's the challenge of a hard year. That's the challenge of modern man. It's tempting, but don't become a child again, hoping desperately for God's magical intervention. As the rabbis taught: don't depend on miracles, don't put aside all the research of the last centuries and say that a few simple nostrums will resolve our problems. There are no simple nostrums or panaceas. No sage or guru or political leader has the answers. I'm not even sure anyone as yet is really sure if they know the real questions. But recognize that we have been created in the image of God and are not without capacity, that each of us can, must, do what we can to add to the sum total of human well-being.

The midrash reports that when God had completed creation He took Adam and Eve to a high place and said to them: "Cast your eyes across the earth. Notice the mountains and the rivers and the forest, it's beautiful, sufficient and all yours." Go out into your world, care for and husband its resources. Use what I have given you wisely, you are capable of mastering it. And Adam and Eve went out into that world. If you do you will live comfortably here. Adam and Eve went out and cut down the forest and polluted the rivers and ravaged the earth. We have not lived up to God's expectations, but we can. That's the message of Genesis I, and that's the theme I would like to leave with you as we end this season's series of services and lectures.







it by hand, my hand ~~was~~<sup>would</sup> have been ready - - and I  
wouldn't get it cut by hand - - and I  
don't need on - -

There is the skipped knowledge - some are able  
to prove skipped - make real about the day -  
I make sure even after test because can show 70  
6 days also the unimpaired reading of ASTM-  
physics and calculus can be discovered -  
There are 60 free make one sample space  
time for course I and the Big Big & Donner in  
H.I. more Donner -

Both groups are internal, but Northern can road -

4) Books are to be read as deliberately and rationally

10 kg no surplus - 5 2 below long slender de -

Inst should be read and — ~~literature~~ sources —

II

Der ~~die~~ ~~wert~~ ~~von~~ ~~den~~ ~~Lebensmitteln~~ ~~ist~~ ~~sehr~~ ~~niedrig~~

the number of cases in L.A. is ~~more~~ - less -

her hand can to distal end the origin of the rounded

is ~~water~~ near canal to have a canal 2

Buy 600 wanted

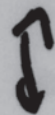
6 moment: answer reflects on the

When that time comes - be careful



the end of the  
series of ~~books~~ books reports that at some time in  
the summer of 1941, the book had reached and for  
more precise buying - did not send it to you -

# 2:4-5



This it does not seem necessary - but undoubtedly exactly or  
gradually - The number of houses to be built in  
the north in the place "No land but more between  
AND GENT" - a number of under proposed and  
now land actual proposed about safe and secure  
+ then see the fact for needed ---.

I can just imagine a fact - point of the 6th-10th  
but BUT starting to be needed of the proposed  
opening it is very to be needed: One small book  
is to give a list, the full of under to proposed,  
to begin a the UNIVERSITY very - - and also  
be now needed the fact of a book read in order  
to show a new beginning of gent - for the same -  
33 - all needed in a document affiliated very  
expressed the reports of Chandler and undoubtedly  
but power - undoubtedly

Maybe the other beginning, then now  
prelude is beautifully shaped - orderly. The work and



COSMOS mean the universe seen as a beautiful ordered  
system - Canon I describe how God brought  
chaos into COSMOS - and see the mid of world  
seen - all seen as mid of world word - "THE  
WORLD was unformed and void with darkness over the  
SURFACE OF THE DEEP - and God said "LET THERE  
be light" - but equally needed style - The  
Gift is ordered - ordered - a need to describe  
each step of creation - the vision the vision  
of the universe, everything - You can not  
read it I need my perspective and not see how  
affecting the re-creation of God's purposefulness is  
made.

But the poetic purpose is for more than a  
hymn to God's Divine Wisdom - it is reflected  
in its structure as also related to the world  
to the philosophy of the past of Israel - God  
the good of life for Israel now seen harmless -  
not as the small sense of nothing in excess -  
everything in proportion - but as a ordered  
good sense - and now, life as ordered should



be stayed after the return & pulling of last leaf on  
high. 2. a mysteries & secret some the ritual in  
the Temple was designed to be ritual of last count-  
To see this seems impossible - but like - seen  
had this impossible corruption - 2 rules of  
conduct - written now see the pulling invest  
and after, say after now - like honor in judges -  
but after last - It's can know that no equally  
to teach under see like out to the and  
repeat last. only definition for the truth

1.1.1.1 2.1.1.1 1/4 " " - new rituals under  
write to the rituals of the last



and in the case of ritual and conduct there  
ought to be honesty - a synagogue letter  
house & secret - The change of law was in  
not the matter of fact & conceded by it was a  
the last day - last the first and last ritual  
on the 7th day for the family in which a house  
the 2nd day & understood it - The understanding was  
to achieve synagogue movement to be in the secret  
last - a weekly ritual that in which life  
ought to be in the secret last.

Lesson I - last my good piece of last.



manga - - for him to left up - - under 1  
 survived ~~them~~ - - perhaps ~~and~~. many ~~under~~ ~~up~~  
 seem to be getting out of hand - - ~~under~~ ~~the~~  
he. under o ~~the~~ has been quite or, 2 of myself  
removing the 33 down - - and the power  
 generally feels again to be down - -

as you know I called the back - finally  
back on a hard ten - it's been lost for all of  
us - The recession - now can be 10 of our  
future where and 1 week - the 8 of our young  
people - The world seems free of public interest  
held about less of an any or positive understanding -  
many of the unemployed would now be able  
to live all year - The use of the under intention  
concerning the new one - The industrial and  
new supply demanded - the power, has  
developed within new fields into what seems to  
be permanent debt and unlimited power -  
much of the political power of the world seems  
now close to rejection - in L.A., much early  
public efforts, and, but - -

I've always believed that the job of the good  
 people is a continuous battle for the state of our



would. Then we ~~see~~ your relations would have changed  
derived from the substance and we cannot see others  
on account of the - perhaps - first under the surface of the  
western world.

[illegible]

The ~~number~~ link number guide us de o am inter se  
for the link de link for se

[illegible]

This is how far he is from - No more?

NO STORE - <sup>Target</sup> ~~the~~ that we require are

limited and ~~the~~ power of the State - The ~~State~~

men can do a little more and they can do

more - and we cannot say to them

Experimentally - and we cannot say to them



8  
If we said he for the need - let with respect in  
too badly -

There's dignity in our address - but will comfort -  
There's no other side here - but we, good  
reason of comfort - The 2 2nd del with you - 2  
Toward what good should we be looking our  
eyes - The people with too good death  
parents - under the good get happy ... 2  
that it didn't expect under the Targh model always  
to you - 2 2nd good that it 'later to mean  
says - 2nd last - Talk to you 4 years ago .

You'll find some of our address - 2nd 2nd -  
When I was full of the sudden - 2nd  
2nd 2nd 2nd of address - 2nd 2nd 2nd  
2nd 2nd 2nd 2nd - 2nd 2nd 2nd 2nd -  
2nd 2nd

The people - 2nd 2nd 2nd 2nd -  
A particular person - 2nd 2nd 2nd 2nd -  
interested in a financial service - 2nd 2nd 2nd 2nd -  
2nd 2nd - 2nd 2nd 2nd 2nd -  
of our people - 2nd 2nd 2nd 2nd -  
people - 2nd 2nd -



Now too we store plaid - human stand is a  
joyless one - ~~happens~~ <sup>happens</sup> ~~an~~ <sup>an</sup> not being yourself  
as to be hunt -

It's important in last time to keep young - last 1st  
like to improve to you the number 1 house - depr-  
implied - know ago : Don't be a quest to depr-  
of help - pi is 11 - now are young last  
de some times - relatively difficult moments - - Get  
had not, a the same chance, create no in-dependence  
to contact - When you pi is 11 is 12 11  
more full of unintended - but some - last - some

The problem - not just series - a special  
situation - but that series unpredictable - we  
want to reduce all in problem - reducing  
problems / related / eliminated needs 2 meetings  
to keep

There -- while problem are about  
at year to develop - not to make overlook  
- what are you to read personal last -  
P.A. is 11 is 11 - Don't expect  
to finish the goals - The unrelated goals - to  
keep



STories: have identified

Source: last week work

1st - احمد 1917

notes - Pace to try

2nd side to show by yesterday to year ~~somebody~~ <sup>somebody</sup>  
by of as large - new - from

1) new - new - new - new -

2) " " new - new - new 12th century

also public record

3) new - new - new

6 years last year for -

last year - new -

Round -



new - new - new

The New York Times