



## 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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Rosh Hashanah sermon; Yom Kippur sermon, 1989.



ROSH HASHANAH  
1989

FOR MANY CENTURIES MEN BELIEVED THAT THE ATOM WAS THE BASIC BUILDING BLOCK OF THE UNIVERSE. THEN THE Curies, LORD RUTHERFORD, & DR. EINSTEIN DISCOVERED THAT THE ATOM ITSELF CONSISTED OF SEPARATE BUNDLES OF ENERGY. THEIR FOLLOWERS WERE ABLE TO SPLIT THE ATOM & DISCHARGE THESE BUNDLES OF ENERGY TO THE BENEFIT OF ALL MANKIND.

AS WITH THE ATOM, SO WITHIN A HUMAN BEING THERE ARE UNEXPECTED AREAS OF ENERGY--SPIRITUAL ENERGY--OF CONSCIENCE, OF SYMPATHY, OF COURAGE, OF THOUGHTFULNESS, OF SENSITIVITY WHICH MAKE US DISTINCT FROM ALL OTHER LIFE UPON THIS PLANET. THE CHALLENGE WHICH IS MAN'S IS TO UNSEAL THESE ENERGIES SO THAT THEY CAN SUFFUSE OUR BEING & BECOME A DOMINANT ELEMENT IN OUR PERSONALITY.

AN ANCIENT PIETY HAS IT THAT THIS DAY, ROSH HASHANAH, WAS THE FIRST DAY OF CREATION, THAT IT CELEBRATED THE BIRTHDAY OF THE WORLD. ANCIENT LEGEND TELLS US THAT ON THE ORIGINAL BIRTHDAY THE ANGELS ASSEMBLED TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION OF THE ADVISABILITY OF CREATING MAN.

THE ANGEL LOVE ARGUED FOR THE AFFIRMATIVE. HE SAID THAT LOVE WOULD BUILD STABLE COMMUNITIES & ESTABLISH FAR-REACHING, FASCINATING CIVILIZATIONS. THROUGH LOVE MAN WOULD SEEK TO DEVELOP THE BEAUTIES OF LIFE. THE ANGEL OF LOVE WAS EAGER THAT MAN BE CREATED.

THE ANGEL WISDOM, TOO, SPOKE OUT THAT MAN OUGHT TO BE CREATED. WISDOM SPOKE OF THE THOUSANDS OF LIBRARIES MEN WOULD FILL WITH THEIR LEARNING, OF THE OUTER REACHES OF DARKNESS WHICH MEN WOULD PENETRATE WITH THEIR MINDS, OF THE BRILLIANT INVENTIONS & DISCOVERIES WHICH MEN WOULD MAKE & OF THE RELIGIONS & PHILOSOPHIES WHICH MEN WOULD DEVISE. WISDOM & LOVE JOINED IN ADVISING GOD THAT MAN OUGHT TO BE CREATED.

THERE WAS, HOWEVER, A DISSENTING ANGEL--THE ANGEL TRUTH. THIS ANGEL SUGGESTED THAT HIS FELLOWS TAKE OFF THEIR ROSE-COLORED GLASSES & REMEMBER THE EVIL CAPACITIES OF MAN. 'DO NOT FORGET THAT MAN WILL CHAIN HIS FELLOWS WITH THE FETTERS OF OPPRESSION, THAT HE WILL BRANDISH NAKED STEEL TO ENFORCE HIS WILL, THAT HE WILL USE THE WHIP TO ENSLAVE THOSE LESS POWERFUL. THE ANGEL TRUTH SPOKE AGAINST THE CREATION OF MAN.

GOD WEIGHTED THE PROS & CONS & MAN WAS CREATED. IN DEFENSE OF HIS DECISION, GOD ARGUED THAT HE HAD PLACED WITHIN MAN A SPARK OF HIS OWN DIVINITY, & THAT WHEN MAN LEARNED TO FAN THIS SPARK INTO A FLAME, HE WOULD HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CONFOUND THE DIRE PROPHECIES OF TRUTH.

WE HAVE WITHIN US ENERGIES EQUAL IF NOT GREATER THAN THOSE OF THE ATOM IF WE WILL ONLY ALLOW THEM TO BECOME DOMINANT IN OUR LIVES.

THERE IS NOTHING INEVITABLE ABOUT WAR OR ABOUT THE SEPARATION OF CLASS, CASTE & RACE WHICH MEN HAVE ALLOWED TO DISTURB THEIR LIVES. MAN CAN OVERCOME THESE IF HE WILL BUT USE THE ENERGY WITHIN, THE GOD-IMPLANTED ENERGY, TO DIRECT HIS LIFE IN USEFUL WAYS.



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WHEN MAN SET OUT TO BREAK OPEN THE ATOM HE BUILT GIANT REACTORS IN WHOSE FIERY CRUCIBLES THE FABRIC OF THE ATOM COULD BE DISINTEGRATED, & THE ATOM'S ENERGIES LET LOOSE. WE CANNOT CREATE A HUMAN CRUCIBLE. YET, I WONDER IF ROSH HASHANAH IS NOT IN ITS OWN WAY A GIANT SPIRITUAL REACTOR. THE MOOD, THE MUSIC, THE STOCK-TAKING, THE PRAYER & THE CONCEPT OF A DAY SET APART FROM OUR USUAL BUSINESS ROUTINE, SOMEHOW FANS THE FLAMES OF THE DIVINE WITHIN US & AFFORDS US A SENSE OF THE SPIRITUAL GREATNESS WHICH WE CAN ASSUME.

A YOUNGSTER ONCE CAPTURED FOR ME THE SPIRIT OF ROSH HASHANAH WHEN SHE SAID, "ON THE NEW YEAR I AM NOT MYSELF. I SENSE POWERS WITHIN ME OF WHICH I AM USUALLY UNAWARE. I AM NOT MYSELF. I AM THE PERSON THAT I OUGHT TO BE."

THE GRAMMAR OF ROSH HASHANAH IS SIMPLE. "I AM, I CAN BE, I OUGHT TO BE, I WILL BE." THE GRAMMAR IS IN FIRST PERSON SINGULAR. ALL ROSH HASHANAH CAN DO IS SET A MOOD & PROVIDE A CONTEXT. YOU MUST PROVIDE THE SPECIFICS.

ROSH HASHANAH DISPLAYS A SIMPLE MESSAGE. YOU HAVE WITHIN YOU, EACH OF US CARRIES WITHIN, A CAPACITY FOR MORAL COURAGE, FOR LOVE, FOR VIRTUE, & FOR GOODNESS WHICH WE HAVE NOT FULLY DEVELOPED. PERHAPS WE ARE NOT EVEN CONSCIOUS OF THIS.

IT IS STRANGE WHAT A LOW ESTIMATE WE ARE PREPARED TO MAKE OF OURSELVES. WE HOLD THIS LOW ESTIMATE BECAUSE OF OUR DESIRE TO PROTECT OUR EGOS, BECAUSE OF VANITY & PRETENSION. WE ACT IGNOBLY BECAUSE THE WORLD IS, WE BELIEVE, AN EVIL & WICKED PLACE. I HAVE HEARD MEN SAY, "WHEN I AM IN BUSINESS I CANNOT ALWAYS WALK A STRAIGHT LINE. I MUST BE CALLOUS IN MY DEALINGS WITH EMPLOYEES & WITH COMPETITORS. BUSINESS IS A DOG-EAT-DOG ENTERPRISE. I MUST BE CONCERNED WITH MY SURVIVAL, WITH MY WELL-BEING & THAT OF MY FAMILY."

THIS RATIONALIZATION IMPLIES 2 THINGS; FIRST, AN AWARENESS THAT IF LIFE WERE SOMEHOW DIFFERENT WE COULD BE BETTER PEOPLE & THE ADMISSION THAT THE WAY WE ACT IS A COMPROMISE WITH WHAT WE KNOW TO BE RIGHT--WITH THE PERSON WE MIGHT BE. SECONDLY, THAT WE CAN JUSTIFY THESE COMPROMISES BY A HARSH JUDGMENT ABOUT THE WORLD IN WHICH WE LIVE.

ARE THESE ASSUMPTIONS JUSTIFIED? I WONDER. IF WE LOOK CLEARLY AT THE BUSINESS WORLD WE WILL FIND MANY OPEN-HANDED, OPEN-HEARTED BUSINESS PEOPLE, MEN & WOMEN OF THE HIGHEST PROBITY WHOSE WORD IS THEIR BOND. FOR EVERY MAN WHO CUTS CORNERS OR SETS SELF-INTEREST ABOVE HONOR, THERE ARE TENS OF HUNDREDS WHO WON'T.

THINK OF THOSE WHOM YOU HAVE HEARD JUSTIFY NIGGARDLY GENEROSITY ON THE GROUND THAT THEIR FRIENDS GIVE SIMILAR GIFTS. I WONDER HOW WE CONCEIVE THAT ALL OUR INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING & HEALING ARE FINANCED & SPONSORED? HAVE WE FORGOTTEN THE HUNDREDS WHO GIVE LARGELY & SACRIFICIALLY OF TIME & OF SELF?

WHAT OF THOSE WHO SAY, "BY PAYING MY TAXES & BY BEING A LAW-ABIDING CITIZEN I HAVE DONE MY SHARE. I DO NOT WANT



TO WORK IN ANY OF YOUR INSTITUTIONS OR ON ANY OF YOUR BOARDS. I WILL NOT DO MORE THAN MY SHARE." WELL, SOMEONE IS STAFFING THESE INSTITUTIONS. PEOPLE GIVE OF THEIR TIME, THEIR ENERGIES, THEIR TALENTS, THAT THIS COMMUNITY & EVERY COMMUNITY CAN BE A FINE & HEALTHY SOCIETY.

NO, WE CANNOT JUSTIFY A LOW ESTIMATE OF OURSELVES BY A LOW ESTIMATE OF OUR NEIGHBORS. WE HAVE ONLY TO LOOK ABOUT US, AT THE CIRCLE OF OUR FRIENDS & OUR FAMILIES & WE WILL FIND GOODNESS SHINING ON MANY A FACE. WE OUGHT NOT ALLOW OUR TEMPTATION TO JUSTIFY WEAKNESS TO ALLOW US TO FORM A LOW STANDARD FOR OUR CONDUCT. IT SIMPLY ISN'T SO.

THERE ARE OTHER CAUSES FOR OUR LOW ESTIMATES OF OURSELVES. ONE IS A HALF-KNOWLEDGE OF PHILOSOPHY & OF PSYCHOLOGY. I HAVE A NEIGHBOR WHO ARGUES LOUDLY ON THIS POINT: HE TELLS ME THAT MAN IS AN ANIMAL BUT ONE STEP REMOVED FROM THE JUNGLE, THAT MAN IS BY NATURE SELFISH & CANNOT BE TRUSTED, THAT HE HAS NEVER SEEN A SINGLE ACT OF DISINTERESTED GOODNESS, THAT WHAT PASSES FOR VIRTUE IS SIMPLY A CUNNING DISGUISE BY WHICH THE MORE ABLE HIDE SELF-SERVING.

I WONDER. MAY I REVERT TO THE SIMILE OF THE ATOM WITH WHICH WE BEGAN. TRUE, I HAVE NEVER SEEN DISEMBODIED VIRTUE, BUT THEN I HAVE NEVER SEEN GOODNESS OR SYMPATHY OR COMPASSION IN THE ABSTRACT. BUT THEN I HAVE NEVER SEEN THE SUB-ATOMIC PARTICLES OF ENERGY WHOSE DISCOVERY BROUGHT US INTO THE ATOMIC AGE. NO ONE HAS SEEN THEM. WE KNOW THEM ONLY THROUGH THEIR ACTIVITY. THE MOST CUNNINGLY CONTRIVED MICROSCOPE CANNOT BRING THE ELECTRONS & THEIR NEUTRONS & PROTONS INTO OUR FIELD OF SIGHT.

WE CANNOT SEE VIRTUE IN THE ABSTRACT, BUT WE SEE IT IN ACTION. WE SEE IT IN THE MOTHER CARING FOR HER INFANT. WE SEE IT IN THE FATHER TRAINING UP HIS CHILD IN THE WAY THAT HE SHOULD GO. WE SEE IT IN THE MINISTER MAKING CALLS ON HIS PARISH, IN THE DOCTOR MAKING THE ROUNDS OF THE HOSPITAL, THE TEACHER IN THE CLASSROOM. WE SEE IT IN FRIENDS, SYMPATHETIC & SOLICITOUS OF OUR JOYS & GRIEF. WE SEE IT IN THE INVALID WHOSE LIPS ARE SEALED AGAINST EXPRESSING PAIN LEST IT BURDEN ANOTHER. WE SEE IT IN THE YOUTH DETERMINED TO FULFILL HIS TALENTS THOUGH IT MEANS PUTTING OFF TODAY'S PLEASURES FOR MORE YEARS OF TRAINING.

BUT REMEMBER, THE ARGUMENT OF MY NEIGHBOR HAD 2 PARTS--NOT ONLY THAT HUMAN VIRTUE DOES NOT EXIST, & THAT WHAT PASSES FOR VIRTUE IS REALLY A TRAVESTY OF IT. NO ONE CAN DENY THAT CHARITY IS SOMETIMES GIVEN OUT OF A DESIRE FOR PUBLIC ACCLAIM & APPROVAL. WE CANNOT DENY THAT SYMPATHY IS SOMETIMES AN EXPIATION OF INNER GUILT. NOR CAN WE DENY THAT SOME MEN ARE CALCULATING IN THEIR VIRTUE. AND YET, LET US FOR THE MOMENT LOOK NOT WITHOUT BUT WITHIN, NOT AT ANOTHER'S ACTIONS BUT AT OUR OWN. LET US ADMIT THAT WE CAN BE CALCULATING IN OUR ACTIVITIES BUT ALSO THAT WE HAVE KNOWN MOMENTS OF INSTINCTIVE, IMPULSIVE SYMPATHY.

THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN WE HAVE GIVEN OF OURSELVES WITHOUT THOUGHT, WITHOUT PREMEDITATION, SIMPLY BECAUSE WE FELT ANOTHER'S HURT OR REJOICED IN ANOTHER'S HAPPINESS.



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THE BEST OF OUR ACTIONS ARE NOT CALCULATED OR PREMEDITATED BUT AN INSTINCTIVE UPWELLING OF THE SPIRITUAL POWER WITHIN US.

WE OUGHT TO THINK MORE HIGHLY OF OURSELVES. WE OUGHT TO REALIZE THAT THERE IS WITHIN US A CAPACITY FOR SAINTLINESS & OF OBSTINATE GOODNESS, & THAT ALL OF US, HOWEVER DILIGENTLY WE WORK AT PERFECTING OUR CHARACTER, HAVE WITHIN UNTAPPED RESERVOIRS OF SPIRITUAL ENERGY.

SOME HAVE TOLD ME, "I WISH THAT YOUR ASSESSMENT WAS TRUE. I WISH THAT MOST MEN MOST OF THE TIME WERE GOOD MEN, BUT READING THE DAILY PRESS, WATCHING THE NEWS ON TV, THIS DOES NOT SEEM TO BE THE CASE. RATHER, WE SEEM TO BE, TO QUOTE THE POET, "HOLLOW MEN, TILLING A SPIRITUAL WASTELAND, " HOLLOW MEN DRAINED OF MORAL ENERGY, SELF-SEEKING MEN, CALLOUS & DETERMINED TO WREAK OUR PARTICULAR EMOTIONAL UNBALANCE UPON SOCIETY.

"LOOK," SENSITIVE PEOPLE SAY, "LOOK AT THE HEADLINES. WE WORK FOR PEACE & YET WE HAVE WAR. WE BEND EVERY ENERGY TO ESTABLISH A WORLD ORGANIZATION WHICH WOULD BRING THE NATIONS TOGETHER IN COOPERATIVE EFFORT. YET, THAT INSTITUTION SEEMS TO BE FIGHTING TO PREVENT ITSELF FROM BECOMING MORE THAN A PROPAGANDA SOUNDING BOARD FOR THE WILLFUL. LOOK AT THE RULERS OF NATIONS WHO TRAMPLE UPON THEIR PEOPLE'S NECKS. LOOK AT OUR OWN COUNTRY, AT THE HATRED, THE BIGOTRY & THE PREJUDICE WHICH ARE DAILY IN EVIDENCE. PICK UP A CLEVELAND NEWSPAPER & YOU WILL SEE EVIDENCE OF THE PATHOLOGICALLY ILL & THE DEMENTED--A MOTHER DRUGGING HER OWN CHILDREN OUT OF SOME DESPERATE NEED FOR PUBLIC APPROVAL, YOUTH SADISTS MURDERING THEIR DRUG COMPETITORS. HOW CAN YOU SPEAK TO ME OF THE POTENTIAL GOODNESS OF MAN? HOW CAN YOU SPEAK OPTIMISTICALLY OF THE FUTURE?"

I WONDER IF THE NEWSPAPERS GIVE US A CLEAR VIEW OF THE WORLD ABOUT US. THEY NEED THE SENSATIONAL, THE SHOCKING & THE STARTLING TO SUSTAIN CIRCULATION. BUT FOR EVERY SENSATIONAL & SHOCKING ACT ARE THERE NOT HUNDREDS OF ACTS OF SIMPLE GOODNESS?

THINK OF YOUR OWN LIFE. YOUR FAMILY CONSISTS OF GOOD PEOPLE--THOUGHTFUL PEOPLE, CONSIDERATE PEOPLE, PEOPLE WHO WORK DILIGENTLY & HONORABLY, PEOPLE WHO JOIN IN GOOD CAUSES SO THAT WE MAY HAVE A BETTER COMMUNITY. YOU ARE SURROUNDED BY LOVE--THE LOVE OF YOUR PARENTS, THE LOVE OF YOUR CHILDREN, THE LOVE OF YOUR FAMILY, THE LOVE OF FRIENDS. HOW OFTEN DOES SOME SENSATIONAL ACT OF VIOLENCE INTERRUPT YOUR LIFE? ONCE IN A LIFETIME--TWICE, PERHAPS? DOESN'T THIS TELL US SOMETHING ABOUT THE PROPORTION OF GOOD & EVIL OF OUR WORLD?

NO ONE CAN CLAIM THAT WE HAVE MET THE CHALLENGE WHICH THE ANGEL TRUTH SET BEFORE US. BUT CERTAINLY, MANY MEN--MOST MEN--ARE USING SOME OF THEIR ENERGIES TO MEET THOSE CHALLENGES. COULD WE NOT DESCRIBE A CHRONICLE OF HEROISM AT LEAST AS SIGNIFICANT AS THE CHRONICLE OF HOLLOW MEN? I SEE IN MY MIND'S EYE A SURGEON VOLUNTEERING HIS SERVICE IN THE JUNGLES OF ASIA. I SEE A YOUNG BLACK



AMERICAN SILENTLY ACCEPTING THE JEERS OF WHITE ADOLESCENT RUFFIANS TO WIN EQUAL RIGHTS TO A DECENT EDUCATION & OPPORTUNITY. I SEE TRAINED YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING HOME TO SPEND YEARS BRINGING THE SCIENCE, THE ORGANIZATION, THE TECHNIQUES, & THE LAW OF THE MODERN WORLD TO THE FORGOTTEN OF THE WORLD. I SEE A YOUNG ISRAELI FARMER SCRATCHING GREENNESS OUT OF BARREN DESERT, EXPOSING HIMSELF DAY BY DAY, HOUR AFTER HOUR TO A BURNING, CRUEL SUN TO FEED HIS PEOPLE. I SEE SO MUCH OF GREATNESS IN LIFE, GREATNESS IN YOU, GREATNESS IN ALL OF US THAT I KNOW THAT IF WE COULD CHANNEL THIS ENERGY WE WOULD BECOME BETTER HUMANS THAN WE ARE.

I EMPHASIZE THE CAPACITY IN EACH OF US BECAUSE THERE IS DESPAIR & A GRAY VISION TO MANY LIVES. MANY HAVE GIVEN UP THE FIGHT, RETIRED INTO A PROTECTIVE COCOON OF ROUTINE. THEY WILL NOT READ THE PAPERS--IT BRINGS ONLY NIGHTMARES & DISTURBS THEIR SLEEP. THEY WILL NOT LEAVE THE NARROW CIRCLE OF THEIR FRIENDS & INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN THE COMMUNITY BECAUSE TO DO SO WILL DEMAND TOO MUCH OF THEM.

LAST YEAR AT A COLLEGE GRADUATION, PERHAPS IN JEST BUT, NEVERTHELESS, SPOKEN, THE VALEDICTORY SPEECH CONCLUDED WITH THESE WORDS; "THE CLASS STANDS BEFORE YOU, WORLD, & ASKS ONLY TO BE LEFT ALONE." WELL, MANY PEOPLE ASK TO BE LEFT ALONE.

THE MILLIONS WHO THROG TO THE RELIGIONS OF OTHER-WORLDLY SALVATION WHERE HEART & HEAD ARE CONCERNED WITH SOME FAR-OFF NIRVANA BUT ARE INDIFFERENT TO CURRENT EVENTS. AND WHAT IS TRUE IN RELIGION IS TRUE OF OUR YOUTH--THE BOHEMIAN, THE BEATNIK, ACCEPTING OTHER-WORLD ORIENTAL PHILOSOPHIES OF RESIGNATION, ASKING ONLY TO BE ALLOWED TO REMAIN IN THEIR UNKEMPT HEAVEN, THERE TO ENJOY THEIR STATE OF DISASSOCIATION FROM MANKIND. THEN THERE IS THE ORGANIZATION MAN WHO WORSHIPS THE GOD OF SECURITY--HE DISASSOCIATES HIMSELF FROM ANY OF OUR WORLD'S NEEDS, WORSHIPS ONLY THE CALCULATING MACHINE & THE PROFIT-AND-LOSS SHEET OF HIS CORPORATION.

MANY HAVE SURRENDERED, GIVEN UP, CEASED THE GOOD FIGHT. WE DO NOT KNOW FOR HOW LONG WE LIVE BUT LET US LIVE QUIETLY. WE ARE NOT BAD PEOPLE. BUT SOMEHOW, THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH FOR US. PLEASE, JUST LEAVE ME ALONE.

THEY CANNOT LEAVE THEM ALONE & THEY MUST NOT BE LEFT ALONE. WE CANNOT ALLOW THE WILLFUL & THE SELF-WILLED TO CONTROL BY DEFAULT THE MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT TO DETERMINE WHEN & WHERE THE COBALT BOMB WILL SPREAD ANNIHILATION. THOUGH WE CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT THE BOMB WILL NOT FALL, THIS MUCH CAN BE GUARANTEED, THAT IF WE RETREAT WITHIN THE DOORS OF OUR HOMES THERE WILL BE DISASTER.

WE NEED MEN WHO WILL WALK ON THE FORESTAGE OF THE WORLD, FIGHTING THE JUST FIGHT, PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF HUMANITY, BRAVING THE ARROWS OF SLANDER & OF CALUMNY, WHICH WILL BE SLUNG AT THEM BY THOSE OF VESTED INTEREST.

WE NEED TO ACCEPT THE SIMPLE TRUTH THAT WE ARE THE



MAKERS OF THE FUTURE, THAT THE FUTURE IS IN OUR HANDS. WHERE IS THE FACTORY OF PEACE? IN NURSERIES & HOMES FILLED WITH LOVE, SHINING WITH THE FINE EXAMPLE OF PARENTS. THAT'S WHERE STRONG-HEARTED & STRONG-MINDED CITIZENS ARE CREATED. WHERE IS IN OUR FUTURE? IT IS IN THE CLASSROOM WHERE WE ARE EQUIPPED WITH KNOWLEDGE, THE TOOLS OF LEARNING. IT IS HERE THAT THE CITIZEN IS FORMED. I SPEAK NOT ONLY OF TEACHERS. CHARACTER IS TAUGHT THROUGH EVERY RELATIONSHIP IN WHICH YOU ARE INVOLVED.

EVERY HELPFUL ACTION WHICH WE UNDEERTAKE IS A CONTRIBUTION TO PEACE. BY RUBBING SHOULDERS WITH A NEIGHBOR WE HELP TO DESTROY THE PREJUDICES WHICH DIVIDE. BY BEING ABLE TO INTERJECT FACT INTO EMOTIONAL DISPUTE WE CALM JANGLED NERVES & DEVELOP A MORE MATURE JUDGMENT. BY INSPIRING THE YOUNG THROUGH OUR EXAMPLE WE SET THEIR SIGHTS WHERE THEY NEED TO BE SET.

WE ARE THE MAKERS OF THE FUTURE. EACH IN HIS OWN WAY, EACH ACCORDING TO HIS UNIQUE TALENTS, EACH WITHIN THE CIRCLE OF HIS DAILY ASSOCIATIONS. IF WE DO NOT THINK ONLY OF OUR LEISURE & OUR LUXURIES, EACH OF US CAN BE THE MAKER OF A GRAND FUTURE.

WE ARE NOT "HOLLOW MEN, TILLING A SPIRITUAL WASTELAND," BUT MEN FILLED WITH A DIVINE SPARK, MEN FILLED WITH UNBELIEVABLE SPIRITUAL ENERGIES, TILLING THE FIELDS OF PEACE & PROMISE. YOU & I ARE, ON THIS ROSH HASHANAH, UNIQUELY DOWERED.

ON THE FIRST BIRTHDAY OF THE WORLD GOD PLACED BEFORE MAN A RICH, BEAUTIFUL WORLD, & TOLD MAN, "THIS IS YOUR WORLD, & THIS IS YOUR CHALLENGE." INTELLECTUALLY AND SCIENTIFICALLY WE HAVE MET A GREAT PART OF THAT CHALLENGE. WE HAVE LEARNED TO CONTROL NATURE. WE HAVE LEARNED TO CONTROL THE SPREAD OF DISEASE. WE HAVE LEARNED HOW TO PROVIDE FOOD SUFFICIENT TO THE NEEDS OF THE WORLD. WE HAVE GAINED THE NECESSARY INSIGHT IN RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY & LAW WHICH MEN NEED TO REGULATE THEIR ACTIVITIES. ON THIS BIRTHDAY OF THE WORLD, IT IS NOT SCIENCE THAT WE NEED BUT FAITH, COURAGE, THE DETERMINATION TO APPLY OUR KNOWLEDGE WISELY & BE MEN WHO ALLOW THE SPIRIT WITHIN TO BE FULLY EXPRESSED, WHO WILL USE THE POWERS WHICH ARE THEIRS--GOD-GIVEN POWERS FOR GOD-STIPULATED PURPOSES.

TODAY WE SENSE NOT ONLY THE PERSON WE HAVE BEEN & ARE BUT THE PERSON THAT WE OUGHT TO BE. TODAY WE EXAMINE NOT ONLY THE WORLD THAT WAS & IS BUT THE WORLD THAT CAN BE. IF WE ARE THE PEOPLE THAT WE OUGHT TO BE, SURELY THE WORLD WILL BE THE WORLD WHICH WE KNOW IT CAN BE.



YOM KIPPUR  
1989

Every holiday has an enemy. The enemy of Yom Kippur is pride. What has pride to do with those magnificent, well written prayers of our liturgy, or with the magnificent, minor-keyed melodies we have heard, or with the rite of fasting? These prayers have no meaning unless they are our prayers, unless they express that which is deep within. And the music has no significance unless it touches our hearts & helps us toward repentance & atonement. The rite of fasting is no more than a crash diet unless we understand its spiritual significance.

There are some who recite every Yom Kippur the litany of confession but fail to see that every item contained in it applies to their own lives. Some leave the synagogue after Neilah exactly as they entered for the Kol Nidre, appreciative of a grand & glorious celebration by rabbi, choir, & congregation, but not one whit the better for it as human beings.

What blinds us to the fact that we are the principal actor in this drama of Yom Kippur, that our prayers are not set speeches by some master playwright but the speeches of our own heart which should be coursing within & disturbing us during the meditation of this day? What is it that blinds us to the meaning of Yom Kippur in our own lives?

Pride.

False pride.

The coronation of the emperors of the Austro-Hungarian empire took place in Vienna in the Cathedral of St. Stephen. This magnificent religious building was a fitting place for a royal ascension. But before the emperor designate was allowed to enter the cathedral for his coronation there was one ritual which he had to undertake. As he approached the gates he found them locked. The Emperor was obliged to summon a church attendant & to cry out, "I the Emperor Franz Joseph of all Austria-Hungary, demand admittance." The canon replied, "We do not know the emperor of all Austria-Hungary. Who is it who desires admittance?" The emperor called out, "I, Franz Joseph, I demand admittance." And again the answer came, "We do not know Franz Joseph. Who is it who demands admittance?" A third time the emperor cried out, but this time his words were of a different tone: "I, a sinner, request admittance."

Permission is granted: enter, sinner. Thou art known to us."

The purpose of this ritual is self-evident. Here was a man who had the power of life & death over millions



of subjects. The future of his people would rest entirely upon his shoulders, & only a man who was conscious of his limitations, of his frailties, of his folly, who was willing to listen & to reason--only such a man was fit to rule.

The rite was well & beautifully conceived. But one wonders in what spirit the emperor designate spoke these words. Did he really think of himself on the morning of his coronation as a sinner?

When the streets of Vienna rang with praise did he have the vision to listen to the still, small voice within saying, "Thou art but a man, no more. Though thou be king, thou art mortal. Though thou be emperor thou will make mistakes." Indeed, if one picks up the chapter book of the canon of the Cathedral of St. Stephen one can read opposite the description of a coronation these words by a pious prelate: "Would that the heart heard that which the mouth hath spoken."

Many of us, I am afraid, undertake Yom Kippur in much the spirit in which the emperors of Austria undertook this rite. When we are full of the surge of youth, or flushed with success, surrounded by friends who are full of respect....when the world paints a glamorous portrait of us, we have little patience with a more carefully drawn picture which shows the sags of weakness, the lines of ineffectuality. We want to be told that we are beyond the ordinary foibles. When we are full of pride, we are empty of humility, empty of that contrition which enables us to see that the litany speaks of us, of our failings, our compromises, & our faults. The pompous egocentric must always remain a spectator at his own Yom Kippur. Surely, the ritual speaks of someone else's faults--not his.

Pride is the enemy of Yom Kippur, & pride is the enemy of faith. An 18th century Hasid was once asked by a disciple where God dwells. He might have answered, God dwells in the beauty of nature or in the history of human progress. Or that God dwells in the spark of divinity that is in every man, God dwells everywhere." The Hasidic answer was otherwise: "God dwells wherever man lets him in." There is truth to this answer, for we come to belief not solely or even primarily through premise & conclusion, through logic. We come to faith by confronting the illimitable expanse of the universe, the mystery of life, the miracle of love, by confronting the fact that we are mortal, small, & that the universe is vast. We are surrounded by unlimited power. Our talents are God-given, given by someone beyond ourselves. We live in a world of wonder, & when we stand in fascination & awe before that world, then faith moves within us. Awe & wonder are the seeds of faith.

God dwells wherever man lets him in. The man who is full of himself has no room for God. One man looks at his family & he says, "How fortunate I am to be surrounded by



such love." As he meditates on the miracle of Love & on the mystery of life he is led to God. Another man looks at his family & says, "How fortunate they are that I am their protector & provider." His thoughts describe a narrow circle of which he is hub & center. He begins & ends with himself. His thoughts can never extend beyond that circle.

He confronts only himself. He confronts only himself.

One man looks at his talents & blesses God for those talents. He looks at his station & he blesses his parents' training, his teachers' understanding, the healing of physicians, and all those unnamed strangers who brought into being by their sacrifice the freedom & the prosperity which he enjoys. Another man looks at his talents & prides himself upon having disciplined these talents. He looks at his station & he prides himself, "All that I have, all that I am, I have achieved for myself." His thoughts begin & end with himself. The British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli reported that the thing of which he was most proud was that he was a self-made man. Critics added that he worshipped his maker.

When we are filled with pride we are not inclined to bow before God. When we are full of ourselves we are empty of God, for we can see only our handiwork, our achievement, our glory. The vast glories of God pale into insignificance--we have no eyes for to see them. And we do not see them.

The observation that pride is the enemy of faith can help us understand much of the dimension of faith in our own day. Social critics & social historians have pointed out that our faith is by & large tepid, uncertain & unsure. True, we believe that faith is a good thing. We send our children to religious schools to learn faith. They listen respectfully, but somehow many cannot hold fast to a strong, vital faith, a faith which gives us power, comfort & courage.

Why not? Why is our faith so lukewarm & uncertain? Are we militantly atheistic? No, atheism is not the dimension of our age. Ours is an age of religious revival. Are we indifferent to faith? No, if we were indifferent we would not join the communions & the churches & the synagogues that we do join.

Why, then, are we uncertain in our faith? The usual answer has been that the content of modern learning has sapped the foundations of faith. The revolution of learning in the last one hundred years, has replaced almost all the axioms of physics, biology, philosophy & psychology by new discoveries, & it seems that these new discoveries undermine all that was once held sacred.

I do not believe this to be so. Faith, belief in God, is no more disproven today than in any earlier century. Indeed, the ship of faith sails on as serenely



in the sea of modern knowledge as it did in the ancient ocean of wisdom. True, science has scraped from the ship of faith many a barnacle of superstition. It is no longer possible for men to believe that Adam was created on the sixth day, or that there was a flood which covered the world for 40 days and 40 nights, or that God has invested in any one communion or church infallible knowledge. The ancients, at least the more brilliant of them, knew long ago that much that we now challenge in the name of science was only myth & was not intended to be taken literally.

Where does faith begin? Faith begins with wonder. Is our world any less full of wonder? Those who work at the outposts of knowledge, who search to bring light into these dark recesses, these are the men and women of faith of our day. They sense the freshness & the force of the world, the world over which we have little control, the world whose dimensions defy description, the world of God, the world whose glory we can hardly describe. No, it is not the content of our modern knowledge which has undermined the substance of our faith.

What, then, has happened? For clearly our faith is uncertain. The answer, I believe, is our vanity. When man looks at the heavens, what does he see? The silver trail of the satellites coursing round our world.

Man looks at his world. What does he see? Towering cities, giant industry, bridges spanning the wide rivers, wherever man looks he sees evidence of his own handiwork. We are a proud age, & have reason to be proud. No age heretofore has achieved as greatly in engineering and technology. We are proud of our accomplishments. But our accomplishments have caused us to lose perspective.

Look to the heavens & see who has created these. What heavens are we looking at? The limited heavens surrounded by the satellites & sputniks? Or the heaven which is infinitely expanding, which is contained only in God? And what do we look for on the earth? Is it for the harmony of sky & soil & sea & air which creates life & permits life, the beauty of the landscape, or is it for evidence of the civilizations which man has been able to build upon this landscape? You must see both, but you must see both in perspective. You must see not only our human handiwork but the handiwork of God. To see & recognize this, I firmly believe, is to have faith.

Pride is the enemy of God, whether it be the pride of the individual or the pride of the race. Only a race or an individual humble enough to see himself in true perspective can accept God & live by His law.

Pride is the enemy of God--pride is the enemy of man.



Pride is the enemy of Yom Kippur. Pride destroys love. What is love but a sharing of life's beauty? What does a beloved say? "My beloved is mine & I am my beloved's." What does the prideful man say? "Love is a conquest. My beloved is mine." He cannot bring himself to say, "I am my beloved's." Pride is the enemy of love because pride destroys sensitivity, our ability to share. Love cannot long survive when men & women lack the capacity to share life's beauties.

Pride is the enemy of friendship. How long can you sustain a friendship if your friend asks for your attention only to gratify his own vanity? He wants your applause, your approbation. He will not listen to your criticism nor to your reason. He wants you for selfish reasons, & once you cease to gratify his whim he will pass you over for someone who knows better how to flatter & how to gratify him.

Pride destroys love. Pride destroys friendship, & pride destroys compassion, those tender shoots which go out from us & permit us to relate to the world about us. Of what is compassion born? Of our recognition that we are frail, that we have moments of folly, that there but by the grace of God go I. We see another falter & instinctively we hold out a supporting arm. The prideful man cannot say, "There but by the grace of God go I", because he does not believe it. He has overcome his weaknesses, he has disciplined his talents, he has overcome the financial & emotional insecurities of life. Why must he have sympathy with human weakness? He has not known the overturn of an economy, the tumult of war which no individual can control. He walks alone in pride as if he is a god.

Pride destroys love & compassion, & ultimately pride destroys man himself. For what is life? Is life a broad highway, smooth & easy? No. Life is a dangerous path along a narrow precipice. Yawning on both sides of the path is death, disease, suffering, financial reverses & loss. In life we need support. We need to be tied by many a rope to family & friends so that if we slip others will shore us up & pull us to safety. The man of pride walks alone. One by one he cuts the ropes which binds him to his fellow men, & when an ill wind blows & he trips there is none to pick him up.

Pride is the enemy of man & the enemy of God. What are the enemies of pride? Self-respect is one enemy.. Self-respect & pride are opposite poles of a single strand of emotion. Pride boasts; self-respect is deliberate in judgment. Pride struts; self-respect walks modestly & humbly. Pride is the center of a narrow world of man's creation. Self-respect is a part of God's vast universe. The man of self-respect condemns vanity in another, &



works diligently to root out pride from his being. The man of self-respect walks with dignity but without pretense. He walks conscious of his talents but does not presume that his talents are of his own creation.... or that they are of any higher degree than those of many others. The man of dignity is conscious of his responsibilities. The man of pride is conscious only of his responsibility to himself.

Yom Kippur is the enemy of pride. Yom Kippur can be likened to a symphony. Like any great symphony it has many moods & many movements circling around a central theme that occurs & reoccurs. And what is that theme? "For we are not so presumptuous & stiff-necked as to say before Thee that we are wholly righteous & have not sinned, but verily we have sinned; we have sinned, we have transgressed, we have done perversely."

The theme of Yom Kippur is man's humanity, his mortality, his frailty. None of us is as perfect or as good as we presume ourselves to be. All of us fail, make mistakes, commit errors & sins. Each of us might be a better human being than we have been. And this is destructive of pride, is it not? For what is pride but a sealing off of the soul from criticism--self criticism or the criticism of another? Psychology has described to us the intricate defense mechanisms by which we create a zone of silence about our personality. We refuse to admit truth to be truth when it is a truth we do not wish to hear.

"For we are not so presumptuous nor stiff-necked as to say before Thee that we are wholly righteous, that we have not sinned, for verily we have sinned, we have transgressed, we have done perversely." Through this long day of prayer must we not pray to hear this truth?

Amen.



YIZKOR

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When Joshua was dying he turned to the tribes of Israel and said simply, "I am going the way of all earth." Death is the common end. Death is as necessary to life as birth. The young need space to try out their wings. Death is not pain but the absence of pain.

When we die our mortal problems are over. In the philosophies of the world wise men encouraged people to accept death and not to fear it, that they should accept their fate with a good deal of graceful courage. Some, unfortunately, look on death as a condemnation to suffering rather than as a release from suffering. This is particularly true in our day when the life span has been elongated and many live on into their 90's. Everyone wants to hold on to life. We know that when a loved one dies the pain is ours and not theirs. There is nothing to fear in death. All who have lived before us have died.

Why do we fear death? Because of loneliness and grief, having to walk our way alone is for many a terrifying prospect. Is it noble to cry over our pain? It is natural for us, but I wonder whether it is noble. Many of our feelings around death are colored by a degree of self-pity. We do not want to age. We do not want to die. We want to live, to live as we do in the fullness of our years. This is manifestly impossible for anyone and everyone. There are quiet feelings about death which Edna St. Vincent Millay wrote about in her poem.

I am not resigned to the shutting away of loving hearts in the hard ground.

So it is, and so it will be, for so it has been, time out of mind:

Into the darkness they go, the wise and the lovely.

Crowned

With lilies and laurel they go: but I am not resigned.

Lovers and thinkers, into the earth with you.

Be one with the dull, the indiscriminate dust.

A fragment of what you felt, of what you knew

A formula, a phrase remains, - but the best is lost.

The answers quick and keen, the honest look, the laughter, the love,-

They are gone. They are gone to feed the roses.

Elegant and curled

Is the blossom, Fragrant is the blossom. I know.

But I do not approve.

More precious was the light in your eyes than all the roses of the world.

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave



Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;  
Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.  
I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

We are not asked to approve of death. Death is simply part of the given. There is no alternative. Resignation is probably the best response to death. The aged and dying among us rarely complain about death. Complaints come because of our own confusion & discomfort. I sometime feel that we are too tender-hearted in our solicitude to offer words of explanation which do not explain, to excuse moping around in tears long after the eyes should have been wiped dry, when we should have turned back to the challenges of life. The widow in her grief says, "why me?" We tend to offer her excuses rather than the simple, "why not?"

To love is to lose. Death deprives us of a cherished life companion, not of life itself. To die is not to lose everything but to recognize that we never own life, and if we have used it wisely our legacy will remain alive long after our death.

So let us pull ourselves together in the face of death & recognize that beyond grief there can be a smile, new feelings, new responses & new responsibilities, new life.

We have learned that it takes a great deal of courage when we have loved and our hearts are broken to feeling and laughter. But the alternative is to live under gray skies, under lonely darkness. If you had listened to the wisdom of this hour you would have listened to the voices of those you loved & lost - strong voices, reminding us that we do not live a half life of resignation & despair, that we do not live and grieve in tears but for life itself, reminding us to find happiness & a way back to the land of the living. We can do this only if we put away the cramping self-concerns and willingly accept our common fate. To live is to know pain & suffering as well as joy. The wise know how to accept grief & yet to transcend it. If they could speak to us now they would remind us of a simple truth.

Face it--you must--& do not turn away  
From this bright day,  
Intolerably glorious & bright,  
Red-gold & blue by day, white-gold & blue by night.

Face it, & doing so,  
Be wise enough to know  
It is Death you face, it is Death whose colors burn  
Gold, bronze, vermilion in the season's turn.

A pure translation, whose impermanence



Informs the watching sense  
Not with despair, but memory & praise  
of the three other seasons' perfect days.

Not only all that lives, but all that dies  
Is holy, having lived, & testifies  
To bravery in season, spirit, man.  
Face it. You must. You can.

The simple & ultimate truth is that we have no  
alternative. We can live half a life of complaint. We  
can live a full life, recognizing that we will be beaten  
down time & again, but God has placed within us the  
capacity to surmount pain & grief & to continue living a  
full life.

