

BETWEEN YESTERDAY  
AND TOMORROW

SERMONS  
BY  
RABBI E. BERKOVITS



1945

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PREFACE

THE sermons in this volume were preached during the darker days of the war. I have tried in them by applying a few fundamental principles of the Jewish conception of life and history to elicit the significance of certain events of these years in terms of a "moral strategy" of the war.

It is with some hesitation that I submit these sermons to a wider public. The spoken word is essentially different from the written one. Committed to print, it must lose some of the force and emphasis derived by it from both the original situation in which it has been spoken and the oratory of the speaker.

To my mind the justification for this volume lies in the persistence of the "original situation," which will most probably not pass for many years yet. In terms of our moral strategy this war will not be over when the soldier has done his work. For a considerable period yet, mankind is destined to grope in darkness between a world that is irretrievably lost and a new life not yet born, the resolute striving for which requires a moral stamina and depth of vision not yet possessed by mankind in general.

To-morrow will come, but not so soon. I hope that in this no man's world between yesterday and to-morrow these sermons may be of some help in the clarification of the issues with which they deal.

In conclusion, I wish to thank Mr. M. Simon, M.A., for valuable help and advice in the preparation of the present volume for publication.

THE AUTHOR  
DEDICATES  
THIS BOOK  
OF SERMONS  
TO HIS COMMUNITY  
THE UNITED HEBREW CONGREGATION  
LEEDS

CHAPTER ONE  
BETWEEN YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

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I  
NOT BY MIGHT.....  
*On the Sabbath after the fall of Paris*

I

**I**n the Haftorah of the day we read the famous sentence which seems to be the summing up of the message of Judaism to the world and which expresses the only hope of humanity in this hour of trial and suspense. \*"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts".

Never have human hearts wished these words to be true more earnestly than they do to-day. On the other hand, never was the human mind more doubtful as to the essential truth of this sentence than it is to-day.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit" . . . there is comfort in this, there is hope in this. But is there more, more than mere comfort and, it may be, unfounded hope, cleverly devised only for those who are in need of such comfort and hope because they are without might and without power? Is there truth in this, truth that can be proved by the facts of our life? Is there historic truth in this?

It is not a little pathetic to observe how obstinately we Jews—a nation that has long forgotten what real might and power are—have always insisted on the tenet of "Not by might".

Again and again in our history we have had to suffer the brutality of power. Again and again we have had to experience in our own life how might rules in this world and how dark and dreary a fate is meted out to those who have nothing more to rely upon than spiritual and moral strength. Never has there been a nation on earth with more

\*Zechariah iv, 6.

reason to respect power than the Jews. But in spite of their experiences no nation has ever treated the exhibition of bare force with more contempt than the Jews. Again and again we witnessed the success of force and material might, again and again we proclaimed: "Not by might but by my spirit, saith the Lord".

How is such an attitude to be explained? How can it be so obstinately maintained in the face of innumerable facts that seem to stultify it? Do we Jews not know this world? Do we not know human nature? Do we not know life? Have we not witnessed the course of human history long enough? Have we not seen force march from triumph to triumph, trample upon the creations of the spirit, ruthlessly destroy moral standards of living, and break everything that in the name of justice or right or truth stood in its way? Have we not learned yet that the only thing that is able to humiliate force is more force? Do we really walk about the world with our eyes shut to the facts? Or do we perhaps cling so obdurately to this unreasonable belief of ours in the spirit because we are so utterly powerless that there is nothing more left for us but this comfort of the weak, this hope of despair?

## 2

I believe that Judaism knows man fairly well; it also knows history and understands it, and because of this Judaism declares: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit".

This is, indeed, our comfort, this our hope. Not the comfort of weakness, nor the hope of despair; but the comfort of fortitude and the hope of strength.

Hope comes of strength, it is justified, when there is faith behind it. And it is the entire faith of Judaism that is the foundation of our hope for the ultimate victory of the spirit. It is our faith in God that stands behind it. Faith in God involves faith in life, it means faith in the ultimate value of life, in a moral purpose slowly but surely realising itself in

life. Faith tells us that this world has been created by Him not for the purpose of being destroyed by the devil. Faith in God declares that the world can never be delivered up to the ravaging powers of darkness and destruction.

Our faith in God, our trust in reason, our confidence in life, our unshakable belief in a moral purpose of history, all this has been summed up in the courageous words: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord". For us who are Jews, this is the very essence of life. If these words do not hold true, life itself is nothing but a horrible nightmare. If the spirit will not conquer, life itself must perish. If justice is to succumb, mankind will be wiped out. If truth is not to be victorious, the whole of the Universe must disintegrate, fall to pieces, and vanish in the void.

Our faith in the ultimate victory of the spirit is unshakable. It is as strong as life is, and it will last as long as life will last on earth.

## 3

But what about the facts of life? Do they not prove that we are mistaken in our faith? Does not life show that it is always the fittest that survive, the mightiest and most powerful? To this we Jews have *lived* the answer: No.

Our own life, our own history gives evidence to the contrary. It is true, often we saw brutal force triumphant, but just as often we saw it humiliated, wallowing in the dust, trodden even by the feet of the weakest. Again and again we witnessed the success of barbarous might, but in many more cases, we watched its destruction and annihilation.

We Jews are the witnesses of human history. There is one thing that we have never experienced: the ultimate triumph of barbarism. Among all the western nations we are the one with the longest memory. We have known almost all the tyrannies of the world, we felt their whip on our own bodies, and to-day we can give evidence that there was

not one among them that we have not seen totter and tumble, fall and crash.

Our very existence, the fact that we are here to-day, able to witness the gigantic bid now being made by brutal force for domination over the spirit and everything that the spirit stands for, the very fact that the Jews are still able to feel the lash of the tyrant's whip, is for itself proof enough that, at the end, it is not the tyrannies that survive, not barbarous strength that conquers.

Napoleon said once—and he should have known if anyone—that there were two principles in the world wrestling with each other for mastery, the principle of the sword and the principle of the spirit, and that ultimately the spirit is always victorious.

It is our deepest conviction that the eternal words of the prophet: "Not by might, nor by power" not only express hope and comfort but also state a fact, explain history and proclaim a truth which has always prevailed and will always prevail.

## 4

Of course, this does not justify complacency; it does not mean that we have nothing else to do but to sit back in our easy-chairs, waiting for the ultimate victory of the spirit.

Whenever a generation facing a violent struggle between force and spirit trembles in fear lest the spirit might lose the battle, one thing is certain: that this generation has sinned against the spirit. And before the spirit can conquer, the sins must be expiated, the wrongs redressed.

The sin against the spirit committed by our generation becomes clear when we compare ourselves with our opponents in the present struggle. On their side, the side of brute force, the struggle is carried on with a methodical ruthlessness the like of which the world has never seen. There is one thing of which the adversaries of the spirit know nothing to-day: compromise. They could have avoided this struggle, they could have achieved great advantages

for themselves by negotiation and compromise. But, "No compromise" has been the watchword of the forces of darkness. And it is precisely compromise which has been the sin of our generation.

Had we been as faithful to the spirit as barbarism has been faithful to its own intentions, the catastrophe would never have occurred. Had the democratic world been as sincere, as uncompromising, as thoroughgoing in what it tried to achieve as the world of darkness was in the pursuance of its own detestable aims, the tragedy would have been avoided.

But, no. They were thoroughgoing and uncompromising; we were not. We adopted the cause of the spirit as our own, but we were not faithful to it. We professed high and lofty ideals, but we were not prepared to make the sacrifices demanded by them.

We said: Justice! but did not care very much when injustice struck the neighbour down. We shouted: Freedom! and had only pity for those who had been robbed of their share in it. We acknowledged Truth, but were always prepared to accept the *fait accompli* created by falsehood, treachery, and the perversion of truth.

There was much selfishness in all of us, and out of selfishness we were always prepared to compromise. This was the great sin of our generation against the spirit. To be sure, barbarism will not prevail; but the spirit can be victorious only through the sacrifices of a faithful and uncompromising generation. This is the only hope for the future. Faithfulness and no compromise. When this terrible conflict is over, there will be more faithfulness, more justice, more truth in the world. It may be that then we shall understand better why all this hardship and suffering and destruction was necessary to bring about that better world for which all mankind is longing.

There is a saying in the Midrash explaining the deeper significance of the commandment of the M'norah, of which we read in the week's portion of the Law.

The question is: Why was it necessary to light a M'norah in the sanctuary? Is the Almighty, who is nothing but light, in want of the light we mortals are able to prepare for him? And the answer is:\*

Rabbi Chanina said: The Holy One, blessed be He, spoke to man: That eye of yours, there is white and black in it, and you see with the dark part of your eye and not with the bright one. So am I, the Lord, nothing but light, and that is why I need the light which comes from you, the light that is perceived in the midst of darkness. Because there is no darkness with me, I need your help, for I need that light that breaks forth out of the darkness.

This is the task of man: to create light out of darkness, order out of chaos, life and happiness out of destruction.

Darkness there must be, that light may be created.

Chaos there must be, that order may grow.

And all this God has put into our own hands; all this depends on us. For all this God Himself is waiting that it may be performed by us; for light out of darkness, for new life and new happiness out of death and destruction; for that great day when it shall become manifest all over the world that it is not by might, nor by power, but by the spirit of God that human happiness can be maintained.

## II

## TOMORROW WILL COME

*Pesach, April, 1941*

## I

THE other day I read a report in a newspaper of a meeting that took place in London. It stated that over the platform flew a banner bearing this inscription: "To-morrow will come, and we shall make to-morrow".

This meeting was not a Jewish one, but the banner bore the Jewish motto. Since the destruction of the Jewish State

\*Tanchuma, Numbers, B'haalotcha.

in the year 70 Jews have been marching to the rhythm of a hope that pointed to the future. We have no To-day; To-day is usually not worth living. We have only Yesterday and we live for To-morrow. We are great masters in the art of going on toiling and drudging in spite of and forgetting the wretchedness of To-day. We have survived utterly unbearable living conditions because we have always known that To-morrow would come, that we shall be there when To-morrow comes, and that we shall make To-morrow.

All our prophets spoke of To-morrow, of the "Great Day" that will come, that is bound to come because there is a God in the world, because there must be a meaning in life.

In the Haftarah of Shabbat Haggadol, which heralds the festival of Freedom and Redemption, we read the words: \*"For, behold, the day cometh, it burneth as a furnace; and all the guilty and all that work wickedness shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch".

For this day we Jews have been waiting all the dark years of our life in Exile, the day of the ultimate annihilation of wickedness, for which together with us the whole world is hoping at this moment. But do we realise as we should what our responsibilities are in respect of this day? Do we understand how to prepare ourselves for To-morrow, how to prepare ourselves for making To-morrow, when To-morrow will be here? These are questions not for politicians only or for War Cabinets, but for everyone of us. And on the reply that every one of us will give to them depends the future happiness of our people as well as that of the whole of mankind.

## 2

There are two things that Jewish tradition teaches us regarding To-morrow. The prophet calls it: †"the great and terrible day of the Lord". Secondly, we are told that God will send us ‡"the prophet Elijah before the great and

\*Malachi i, iii, 19.

†Malachi, iii, 23.

‡Ib.

terrible day". Two questions arise from these statements. First, why is it to be a terrible day? A great day, yes. A glorious day, yes. For wickedness will be destroyed and justice will triumph. But, why a terrible day? Why not a day of joy and happiness? And then, why is it Elijah who will be sent to herald this great and terrible day?

To the first question we may give the answer that it will be terrible because To-morrow must not be the day of triumph for one nation over another, terrible for one and happy for the other; nor must To-morrow be a day of political and military victories alone; but a day of triumph for justice over injustice, for decency over brutality, for truth over lies. It will be terrible because wickedness will be so completely exterminated that, as the prophet put it, "neither root nor branch will remain of it". Now, where are the branches and roots of wickedness?

Let us not deceive ourselves. Let us not point to this or that country alone. The roots and branches of wickedness are very widely spread all over the world. They are here, there, and everywhere. In our day, Evil has become a world-power in the shape of Nazidom and Fascism. But it could become such a force in Germany and Italy only because it was mighty and powerful in all countries. When the forces of evil cautiously started to build up their power in Italy and Germany, they found, probably to their own surprise, that they had powerful allies all over the world. Their allies were the "roots and branches" of evil spread among all the nations. Instead of indignation, instead of the wrath of the civilised world, they met with encouragement, understanding, and sympathy, or, at the very least, with timid toleration.

There was one sin of which the whole world became guilty in the last couple of decades: the toleration of evil. In diplomatic language it was called Neutrality. But are we allowed to be neutral towards wrong-doing, brutality, persecution and the suppression of justice, truth and freedom?

The world was neutral, the nations were "tolerant" and did not want to realise that the toleration of evil is in itself doing evil. By tolerating evil we all lent a hand in making it the terrible power of destruction which we see it to be in these days. By tolerating evil the whole world has become accessory to the crimes which have been committed by the power of evil.

Some years ago a famous American author wrote a novel in which he pictured a supposed successful Fascist revolution in the U.S.A. By the very title, "It Can't Happen Here", he satirised those people who thought to parry such an event by the constant repetition of this and similar phrases. People do not realise that, after all, there is but one human race and we are all made of the same stuff. It is not the case that one part of mankind consists of mere devils and the other of pure angels. Fundamentally, all men are alike. If wickedness is strong somewhere in the world, it only proves that it is strong in us human beings. And what happens in any one country can only happen there because it may happen everywhere. Only because it is a latent possibility everywhere can it be turned into triumphant actuality somewhere.

We are accustomed to accuse the totalitarian States of having no respect for the sanctity of the pledged word or promise. But do we ourselves always honour our promises? Have we never broken our word? We call them brutal—and brutal they are—but is there no brutality in our own life?

We call the dictators, robbers and exploiters, and rightly so. But, is there no robbery and exploitation in the rest of the world?

They are unjust; are we always just? They know nothing of decency, but do we always act as decency would require? They are liars, it is true, but are we prepared to bring any sacrifice that may be asked in the interest of the truth?

Let no one assert that there is a fundamental difference

\*By Sinclair Lewis.



between these two sets of shortcomings. There may be a difference of degree, but essentially they are linked together, and only together do they represent the whole picture. Because evil has been strong in us it was able to become a world power in others. Had there been more justice exercised in our small individual worlds, we should have had more justice in national affairs. Had there been more love in each of the nations, we should have had more kindness and understanding between the nations. Had we been more truthful, truth would be mightier. Had we been more just, justice would be stronger.

We have all become guilty, every one of us has his own personal share in the terrible crimes of our generation. Humanism died out because it died out in us. Civilisation collapsed because it collapsed in us. Man has failed, and we all are responsible. Evil has triumphed, because it has its roots and branches everywhere. Yet, To-morrow will still come. In fact, it is already on its way. To-morrow has already started. For To-morrow is not only a great day, it is also a terrible day, for To-morrow will bring the extermination of evil. Unfortunately, there is to be extermination everywhere; the roots and branches of evil are widely spread all over the world.

There exists a common guilt in all mankind, and we all have to expiate it.

## 3

To-morrow will come and, because of our sins, it is to be a great and terrible day. But, why will it be heralded in by the prophet Elijah?

The explanation is comparatively simple.

One of the most dramatic episodes in the life of Elijah was his throwing down of the challenge to the King and the people in the words: \**"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal,*

\*I. Kings xviii, 21.

follow him". Strange words were these. If Baal be the truth, go and follow him. They did something that was even worse than the straightforward and clear acceptance of idolatry; they wavered between two opinions, between two worlds, God and Baal. The nation tried to serve both, God and Baal. It aimed at a compromise between God and Baal. And this, the compromise between the service of God and the service of Baal, is worse than the clear acceptance of Baal, for it is the distortion of the truth that is in God. Compromise between truth and a lie is worse and much more dangerous than a clear-cut lie, for it involves the misuse of the truth in the service of the lie. A mixture of light and darkness is worse than unmixed darkness, for it is the darkening of light. There must be no compromise between God and Baal; rather than compromise, serve Baal wholeheartedly.

We have said that there is a common guilt in the world because the whole of mankind had—to say the least—tolerated the growth of evil and by toleration helped it to become powerful. It is well to realise that this blind toleration was only possible because, like Israel at the time of Elijah, the world was halting between two opinions, because we were wavering between the service of the truth and that of falsehood. We thought of compromise between justice and its violence, between the forces of freedom and the forces of slavery, without realising that there are certain moral purposes in the life of man which do not admit of any compromise.

Whatever good we have tried to do we have done half-heartedly. We had democracy, but democracy had no faith in its own destiny. We had a League of Nations, but one that was startled by its own boldness. We wished for peace, but did next to nothing to secure it.

And if we think of our own Jewish affairs, it cannot be doubted that all our Jewishness bore the stamp of half-heartedness. Whether the issues were national, communal or religious; whether Palestine or the Community or Jewish

Education was at stake—we have bungled everything, all our efforts have been covered with the pale cast of unhealthy compromise.

It is an old Jewish custom to open the doors of our houses on the "Seder" nights to welcome the prophet Elijah. By this custom we wish to indicate that we are still waiting for To-morrow, waiting for Elijah to announce that To-morrow has come. I feel, however, that Elijah's reply would be: Well, brother, To-morrow will come. But are you still wavering between two worlds, are you still trying to serve God and Baal? If so what is the good of To-morrow, what use are you going to make of To-morrow?

To-morrow will come. But, are we prepared for To-morrow, are we ready to make To-morrow?

To-morrow will come if the common guilt of the past is succeeded by the common responsibility of the future. To-morrow will come if half-heartedness and compromise make way for faithful and unconditional service of God.

To-morrow comes only to those who are able and prepared to make To-morrow.

### III

#### THE WANDERING AMALEK

*Purim, February, 1941*

PEOPLE speak of us as "the wandering Jew." The wandering Jew does not travel alone; he is accompanied by the wandering Amalek. Wherever the Jew may go, Amalek follows on his heels. We have known him since first we made our appearance on the stage of the world's history. Amalek has driven us from country to country, he has followed us from nation to nation. It has always been the same story: Jews fleeing from oppression, wandering on deserted tracks, hoping for rest, longing for safety, and when they thought that they found it at last—\*"Then came Amalek". Jews run

\*Exodus, xvii, 8.

from Amalek, but Amalek is everywhere. They say the Jew is ubiquitous, much more so is Amalek. They call us international, much more so is Amalek.

"Then came Amalek." Once more Amalek has come; but this time he has laid aside his mask and revealed himself in his true shape. This time he has come not only to us Jews, but, like a lightning scourge, he has swooped down on the nations and the whole of mankind. For the first time in history he has revealed himself in his true colours. Amalek! The enemy of the Jew, the enemy of the world.

This, of course, must have been a very unpleasant surprise to those who had some sneaking regard for Amalek, the Jew-baiter. There is, however, nothing new in Amalek being the enemy of mankind. This has always been so. Whether people saw it or not, our enemies were always the enemies of progress and happiness.

For why does Amalek hate us? There are many people, and very often even Jews, who are always prepared to point to certain faults of the Jewish character, or to certain forms of Jewish behaviour, as the causes of anti-Semitism. When a non-Jewish clergyman not long ago in a letter to the Jewish Press suggested in all good faith and with the best intentions that the reason why the Jews were hated was because they were no longer good Jews, we were treated to the absurd spectacle of a number of Jews rushing into print to prove that his theory was ridiculous, and that the faults for which the Jews are blamed are not their faults, or that they are not responsible for them.

Of course, we do have our faults. We do not wish to be angels. We go even further and declare that in claiming our right to live we claim the right to have faults like any other nation on earth. Whoever denies us the right to human shortcomings is at the bottom of his heart denying us the right to live. Yes, we do have our faults. But only the most narrow-minded can think even for a single moment that we are hated because of our faults. Ask the record of the world to give evidence. When have the nations

hated out of moral indignation? How often has it happened in human history? When has the world at large hated faults and loved moral perfection? It is true that once upon a time there lived a Jewish prophet who called for such a hatred and such a love, a prophet who, witnessing social injustice, the exploitation of the poor, the persecution of the weak, called out in the anguish of this soul: \**"Hate the evil, and love the good"*. But when did men listen to him? When did they hate evil as they can hate, and when did they love good as they can love?

The general history of the nations fully explains the particular history of the Jew. Moral considerations have hardly ever in history determined the objects of hatred or love. The story of love and hatred among nations as told by history shows that nations love themselves and as a consequence they will love the lie that subserves their selfish interests, they will love the evil that will lead to the attainment of their aims, they will love every crime and every vice that will help them to satisfy their boundless self-love. They can hate too, and how they hate everything that stands in their way! They hate justice if it attempts to interfere with their machinations or to curb the gratification of their desires: they hate decency, if it bids them to abandon their plottings against the happiness of others. But faults? They do not hate faults. The idea of an anti-Semitism created by Jewish faults, as an expression of moral indignation sustained for 2,000 years, is contrary to all historic experience, it is a fairy tale that can only be believed by cretins and hypocrites.

All historic experience goes to show that peoples and nations have always been so wrapped in self-love as to resent everything that is strange to them, everything that differs from them. The more unusual a thing is, the stranger it appears, the more is it resented. Normally, however, the general aversion against the stranger is kept in check by certain considerations. For instance, one cannot always

\*Amos v, 15.

hit him when one would wish to, for most probably he will hit back. But what if there need be no fear of retaliation, and what if the person whom you resent but need not fear is the strangest among all the strangers, differing from you most? Then, naturally, the aversion becomes more intense. Then, there is but one thing that can control it: humanity, justice, the love of good and the hatred of evil. And if people do not hate evil, they will love only themselves and hate everything that is not themselves and can be hated without fear of reprisals.

These rules derived from historic experience are, in the main, sufficient explanation of anti-Semitism. Jews are hated because they differ and dare to differ without having a hard fist to defend themselves when the necessity arises. We are hated not because this or that is wrong with us, but because much is foul in the world at large.

Amalek stands for the person who lives by uncontrolled impulses, by animal instincts. He hates because he is a hater. He hates us because he follows the line of least resistance and in doing so he is able to trample justice and human dignity underfoot without risk of retaliation. But he hates not only us. He is the enemy of the world to the same extent as he is our enemy; as he hates us, so does he disdain decency and justice.

And again Amalek has come; not only over us, but as a consuming pestilence over the world. This time he is mightier than he ever was in the past and for this reason he has had the audacity to strip himself of his old disguise. This time he stands before the world in all his naked brutality and hideous ugliness, exposing himself and all the other little Amalekites who were still pretending to hate Jews because of this or that. He has torn the mask from all of them and has taught the world once again that the enemy of the Jew is the enemy of mankind. It is time that the world learned the lesson.

He who denies justice to the Jew will deny justice to anyone else whenever it suits his purpose.

He who repudiates decency in his dealings with Jews will

do the same whenever he is able to afford it in his dealings with non-Jews.

He who treads the human dignity of the Jew under his feet has no respect for the dignity of other human beings either.

It is time that all this should be understood and acted upon in the best interest of all mankind.

In these days there is much talk about the coming of a new and better world which is to be built on the ruins of the past. What is to be the place of the Jew, of the Jewish nation in this New World? We hear almost nothing about it. In fact, a suspicious silence is kept on this question. On the other hand, we have witnessed certain actions on the part of those who are fighting for that better world which are not encouraging at all. Remember the shameful regulations concerning Jewish internees in one of the camps in Canada. Think of the disgusting treatment of refugees who were fortunate enough to escape from enemy-occupied territories and succeeded in reaching the shores of Palestine. After having been rendered homeless (partly also thanks to the stupidity and hypocrisy of "democratic" policy in the years before the war), now they have been deported like criminals in their hundreds, men, women and children, to some unknown destination.

We do not know what this New World will look like. But here I give the most reliable method of proving its real worth: what is the plight of the Jew in the New World?—this will be the test. Have the wrongs been righted, has justice been done to this nation? The answer to this question will tell of the sincerity of the New Order. For here you have a nation, claiming its right to live, which is unable to back up its claim by huge armies and by might, a nation that is claiming its right in the name of right, that can back its claim only by the moral conscience of the world. The measure of justice the world is prepared to grant this nation is the measure for the acknowledgment of all true justice on earth.

Once more Amalek has come; not only over us but over the whole of mankind. Will the nations understand the meaning of this lesson? Will they learn that justice as well as freedom is indivisible: that there can never be one measure of justice and freedom for the use of the Jews and another for the mighty masters of the earth? Will a new period of human history open in which the watchword will be: "Hate the evil and love the good"? Or shall we again be disappointed?

## IV

## THE BINDING OF THE SONS

*Day of Remembrance, 1941*

## I

ON behalf of the religious authorities of this country we have been asked by the Chief Rabbi to observe this Sabbath before Armistice Day "as a Day of Remembrance and Dedication as last year—Remembrance not only of those who gave their lives in the last war but of those, both of our people and of our Allies, who have given their lives in the present war; and of Dedication to the high cause which has been committed to our nation".

Remembrance and Dedication are two words which have worn dangerously thin in the course of human history; they have been used much too often and always in the same unsatisfactory way.

It is unfortunately the case that in every generation there are those who have to give their lives and have, therefore, to be remembered.

Unfortunately too, every generation is at least once in its life-time committed to "the high cause" that demands of us to be prepared to give our lives.

The constant recurrence of these demands only proves

that we do not know how to remember or how to dedicate ourselves to "the high cause". For, surely, the purpose of the dedication should be to create a world in which no man need ever be committed to the famous high cause that necessitates our giving lives in order that future generations may live more happily.

So far we have failed in this.

Surely, the meaning of remembering our dead cannot be only to honour their memory and to express our sorrow and our gratitude. The purpose of remembering should be the creation of a world in which there is no remembrance of those who brought the supreme sacrifice, because there has been no necessity to die for "causes".

So far, we have failed in this. We have failed because we do not know yet how to remember, we do not know how to dedicate ourselves. Where lies the fault or the mistake?

It is possible to approach this question from many angles. On this Day of Remembrance and Dedication, however, I will try to approach it through the medium of one of the simplest and plainest of words, the word Mother. We do not know how to remember, how to dedicate ourselves because we have built up a civilisation that has neglected and often even ignored the Mother.

## 2

What I mean is very impressively illustrated in the week's Sidra. There we read the famous story of the Binding of Isaac. God spoke to Abraham: \*"Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest, even Isaac, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering". And Abraham rose early in the morning . . . eager to fulfil the command of God, and he took his son Isaac.

Much has been said and written on the subject. We have been accustomed to admire Abraham. But, for the last few years, since the present tragedy of mankind began, whenever

\*Genesis XXII, 2.

we read the story of the "Akedah", I seldom think of Abraham; I think of somebody else, of somebody who is not even mentioned in the story, who seems to be entirely forgotten, whose share was yet the most tragic in the great drama: Sarah, the Mother.

Abraham and Isaac undertook to fulfil a command of God, they dedicated themselves to a very high cause, they were heroes. But there was no command for Sarah. She was only the mother and nobody thought of her.

Take your son, your only son, whom thou lovest, take Isaac, said God to Abraham. And Abraham was a great man, very great indeed; he did not waver. He rose early in the morning and took his son.

And yet, I wonder, would he not have been even greater if he had answered like this: Almighty, I am prepared to do your bidding. I am prepared to offer you my son. But, you see, he is not only my son. There is Sarah too, and he is much more her son than mine. After all, I am only the father, she is the mother. Let us ask her too. Is she prepared to give her son as a burnt offering?

But there is no mention of the mother. There was the high cause of a great man and in it a mother had been forgotten.

Remembering the innumerable Isaacs who have been offered by their fathers to one or the other great cause, we must describe our civilisation as the history of "the great man" who continually commits himself to "high causes" and forgets the mother.

The "great man" is hardly ever so great as Abraham was: the "high cause" is hardly ever so high and so pure as Abraham's cause was. In the terrible drama of the Binding of the Sons and their delivering up to the "high causes", which is being acted by the nations all through recorded history, the place of God has often been taken by some bloodthirsty Moloch and the place of Abraham by so-called great men who have been the mad servants of Moloch. And because of this, unlike the case of Abraham, there is no one to stay the hands of the fathers.

And yet it seems to me that there is one thing that could check the outstretched arm, chase Moloch from his usurped throne, and call back the "great man" to normality: the remembrance of the Mothers.

In these terrible years, I have often wondered whether those who are so well prepared to destroy life and happiness ever think of their own mothers. Whether, thinking of their mothers, they would still be able to destroy and to commit all the acts of brutality with which they are dishonouring human nature? Whether, bearing in their hearts a picture of their own mothers, they would not remember that the other man is also a son, a child, and his mother too wishes him to live and to be happy?

Would there ever be wars if the fathers would realise that their sons are first of all the sons of the mothers? If, instead of being so eager to sacrifice their sons for their causes, they would think for a while of the mothers, and then go to them and speak like this: Mothers of our sons, there is a great cause in the world to which we have committed ourselves. We need the sons, your children, we need their lives in the interest of the great cause. Can we have them?

Would the mothers, if left to decide for themselves, recognise any other high cause than the greatest and holiest of all causes, that of being a mother, of giving life and protecting life?

## 3

We do not think of the mothers. We forget them. They have neither the place, nor the respect, and certainly not the power that should be theirs. For ours is the civilisation of the "great father" with his "high cause". And one must fear that so long as this remains so, we shall have to continue remembering generation after generation of those "who have given their lives".

The "great father" is usually so small that he does not

even know how to remember his sons. He remembers them as heroes who have died for something worth dying for; thus, he is able to see some justification and sense in their tragedy. Remembering them we wish to comfort ourselves for the loss; there is always the high cause that justifies the greatest sacrifice. But, if you justify the loss, if you can find meaning in it, you are already preparing the next war.

Let us, at least, learn from the mothers how to remember. The healthy instinct of the mother, if not corrupted by our masculine civilisation, does not remember glorious heroes, but children who died before their time, who died because the fathers were stupid enough to allow a world "order" to exist in which war became the readiest way to human happiness.

At this moment, it certainly is an imperative necessity to gather all the remaining strength of all free men on earth to destroy the forces of darkness which threaten to engulf mankind. But let us feel horror at a world in which such a situation can arise. Let us remember the madness of previous years which has led inevitably to the present catastrophe.

There are many plans for avoiding the recurrence of such a situation. There were such plans after the last war, there are such plans after every war. So far, they have been of no avail. And sometimes, one feels that they failed because they were drawn up by the fathers. Fathers are prone to commit themselves to all kinds of causes in which they forget the mistakes of the past, the tragedies of the past, and so allow the world to drift into a situation in which the sons must give their lives that Life may be possible.

To-day, let this be our dedication: to rid the world of every purpose that demands human sacrifice.

Let this be our remembrance: to remember the sufferings of the mothers all over this unhappy globe.

And let this be the aim of the peace: no more suffering mothers; never again should a mother suffer because her child is hungry or because her child has no chance of a full and contented life. Never again should mothers be miserable

because their children must dedicate themselves to one or other of the "high causes".

Remembering the dead, let us remember the mothers. Dedicating ourselves, let us dedicate ourselves to this one aim: Happy mothers all over the world.

## V

## ON A STRATEGY OF FAITH

*After the British Debacle in Greece, Spring, 1941*

## I

I wish to dwell on an important aspect of the strategy of this war. Naturally, not on its military aspect. This is not our business, nor is there place for it in a synagogue.

However, in a struggle like this, which, as it proceeds, reveals itself more and more clearly as a contest between good and evil, there is an aspect of strategy which is just as important as the military one, namely, the moral strategy of the battle.

Let me try to explain what is meant by a moral strategy.

In the last few weeks, this country sustained a number of military and political reverses. People went about with gloomy faces. They were disheartened by the long succession of defeats. Perplexed and bewildered, they listened to every transmission of the wireless, they bought every newspaper they could get hold of, looking for some guidance, hoping for some pleasant surprise, for a voice to tell them that, after all, things were not so bad.

I venture to assert that the reason why their uneasiness was so acute was that they thought in terms of military strategy alone, they thought only of bombers and tanks, of armies and generals, but were unable to judge events by the standard of a moral strategy.

A war between good and evil, however, should mainly be judged in terms of moral strategy.

## 2

The prophet Habakkuk expressed the basic principle of moral strategy in one short sentence: \**"The righteous shall live by his faith."* In the context the Prophet in striking language describes that †*"bitter and quick nation"* which marches out over the wide plains of the world, destroying and devouring irresistibly, until it meets with an inglorious end at the hand of ‡*"all the remnant of the peoples"*. In that terrible time of trial and suspense, while the "horsemen" of the enemy "fly as a vulture that hasteth to devour", while they "gather captives as the sand", "scoff at kings and princes", "deride every stronghold", in that time the just will live by his faith.

How one can live by faith alone, confronting all the might of a ruthless adversary, we Jews should know. In the whole record of mankind there is no nobler and more inspiring example of the sustaining and invincible power of faith than the history of the Jewish nation. Our enemies, always many and powerful, disappeared. We, always few and powerless, have survived. They went under, living by their might. We have survived, living by our faith. They relied on military strategy and were destroyed; we relied on moral strategy and were preserved.

Bearing in mind this principle of moral strategy, a strategy based on faith, I was not gloomy, I felt no real uneasiness at the disquieting military and political events of the last few weeks. On the contrary, I noted with a thrill of joy the first signs of a future of hope for mankind. For the following reason :

In this struggle between good and evil one of the most decisive factors will be the rebuilding of faith all over the world. It is the great tragedy of our times that men and nations have lost faith in justice, in freedom, in humanity, in goodness. They do not believe any more that it does pay to be good and humane and just. The Faith of mankind is in ruins. The staggering successes of evil are due to the

\*Habakkuk II, 4.

†Ib., I, 6.

‡Habakkuk II, 8.



fact that for many long years so-called democratic statesmen were busy destroying and betraying the faith of mankind. They were stupid enough not to be concerned with moral strategy at all. To re-establish the faith of mankind in justice and democracy, in honour and human dignity, is the first condition for the victory of the just cause. Seen under this aspect, the happenings of the last few weeks mark the beginning of the epoch of justice for which the world is longing.

What happened was something extremely unusual, most uncommon; something the world has not witnessed for a very, very long time indeed.

The newspapers reported: Great Britain sent an army to help a small nation. And then: this army was defeated after having inflicted heavy losses on the enemy.

From the point of view of moral strategy, however, what happened was this: A great Empire, harassed from all sides, fighting for its very existence, struggling with a formidable foe while hampered by the lack of essential military equipment, had thrown overboard all considerations of military prestige and sent help to a forlorn hope in spite of the knowledge that there was no chance of success; and this was done in order to honour a pledge, to keep a given promise, this was done for the sole reason that anything else would have been dishonourable. Thus had begun the reconstruction of the betrayed faith of men all over the world.

This is how these weeks will be remembered in the future.

We were witnessing the first important move in the long-neglected moral strategy of the struggle. What we experienced was the first noble effort to blot out the shame of the last two decades, the foolish and sordid haggling of a stupid "democratic" policy concerning the fulfilment of treaty obligations.

The world will not forget this. The world will gain new courage from this, and new hope. Men and nations will start to learn anew the long forgotten lesson of faithfulness. For the first time, after many years of tragic disappointments

during which Machiavellian heresies were current among men and nations, they have seen that a great nation was prepared to lose rather than to betray. In the field of moral strategy this is the first success of the cause of justice. For every deed of decency is a blow against the forces of evil. It encourages humanity. It must bring forth more and mightier deeds of decency all over the world and will gradually build up the invincible power of the just cause.

The time will come when this great country will reap the blessed fruits of this defeat in the cause of faithfulness in the Balkans. The cause of justice cannot be lost by the exercise of justice, but only by the betrayal of it.

## 3

In these last weeks of uneasiness, I had often to think of the great change that had taken place in the nature of the Jew. We Jews used to be accustomed to catastrophes, to Jewish and world tragedies. We have seen much, but we seem to have changed much. In former times, in the midst of tragedies, Jews were firm, quiet and steadfast. To-day we are nervous, fidgety and doubting. Our ancestors lived by their faith and were the great masters of moral strategy. We, however, are a generation without real faith. For our ancestors Faith meant the idea of a great pattern of universal and cosmic life, devised by God and carrying a deep, though often hidden, sense. All the happenings around them, all the events of their individual lives or those appertaining to the life of the nation and of mankind, wars, epidemics, natural catastrophes, had their appropriate place in one great Divine scheme. The scheme, as they understood it, may often seem to us naive and simple. Its greatness consisted in the fact that no event was taken at its face-value, but was seen in a certain relation to the whole. A disaster did not count as such, it counted only as the part it had to play in the whole system of a life based upon Faith.

We, however, are a generation without Faith. Because of this we hang on the words of the wireless commentator or



the military spokesman; because of this we are sometimes filled with doubt and see no end to this age of darkness.

The reconstruction of life by Faith is among the foremost tasks of our generation. Real faith in God will mean faith in reason and humanity. Faith in God teaches with an iron logic that wrong-doing does not pay in the long run, that it is not the way of life but of destruction and death.

Once there is Faith in us and the nations, the downfall of the forces of evil will be in sight.

Let us build Faith up in the world. Let us learn the logic of Faith and the strategy of Faith, and the world will appear in an entirely new light; even disasters and catastrophes will point to a happier future and a new era of hope for all men and all nations.

## VI

## LET US HAVE CLEAR FRONTS

*May, 1941*

## I

ONE of the most amazing features of our times has been the overwhelming success of evil.

We are not concerned here with its many military victories in the field, but with its innumerable victories over human minds and hearts all over the world.

For a number of years, I had the opportunity to watch from close quarters how a once great nation had been systematically drugged with an ideology of barbarism and how it came to hail such an ideology as its only salvation.

I shall never forget one afternoon in the early weeks after the advent of Nazidom to power. I was sitting in one of the reading rooms of the Institute for Philosophy of the Berlin University when the philosophic quietude of the premises was suddenly desecrated by the crude noise of heavily tramping military boots. The door was flung open and before us stood a tall young fellow, clad in the

ill-famed uniform of the S.A. Battalions of terror. At first there seemed to be nothing uncommon in the sight. In those days, we had already become accustomed to the invasion of the precincts of learning by uniformed brutality come to carry out the "Gleichschaltung" of the spirit.

We continued with our work. But gradually we noticed that, after all, there was something uncommon about the visitor. He moved about not like a newcomer, not with the wary and curious steps of a new landlord who was having a first look round at his freshly-acquired property. He tramped about with mighty, steadfast strides, never wavering and with complete self-confidence finding his way about the maze of books.

One's first impulse was to think: what a proof of uniformed efficiency. But no! This would be a mistake. I looked at him again and saw no efficiency; I saw what the world had to learn in the years after: Treachery. I saw all the great books which enclosed us betrayed. The newcomer was no newcomer. His uniform only was new; the mighty tramping was new to him. But he himself was an old acquaintance of ours. He was the young and promising First Assistant of that Institute of Knowledge and Wisdom, the rising hope of the philosophic school. How modestly he used to walk about on well-educated democratic feet, conscious of his responsibilities as one of the foremost young men among the representatives of the spirit.

No, he was no newcomer. The treason was new, his brutish trampling on Plato and Aristotle, his betrayal of Kant. The selling of the spirit to political success was new. The degradation of philosophy to the role of a handmaid to force was new.

I shall never forget the shame we felt at such degradation. Since then the picture of the philosopher in the S.A. uniform has served me as a clue to the happenings of our days.

Year after year, it was the same story that repeated itself before our eyes. Knees bowing to the success of evil and worshipping it. Year after year, the same tragedy of the

## COMMON RESPONSIBILITY

## XXIV

## THING AND PERSON

*At the Annual Service of Jewish ex-Service Men, January, 1943*

THE story of David and Jonathan offers us one of the most noble examples of comradeship in world literature. Many circumstances in the lives of these two men seemed to conspire to keep them apart. There was first the difference of social status—Jonathan, a prince, loved by the King and the people; David, only the youngest son of a humble family in Israel, the keeper of his father's sheep. Then later there were the opposing ambitions of the two men, which normally should have made them enemies for life. Jonathan was the crown prince, entitled to the succession to the throne; and David an unknown adventurer, emerging from the common herd and grasping at kingship in Israel. And lastly, there was the bitter hatred of Saul, his warnings to his son against David, the menace to the dynasty.

Yet all this could not separate the two men. The spirit of comradeship in which they were united triumphed over differences of social status and personal ambitions, as well as over dynastic interest and *raison d'état*.

I use the word "comradeship" intentionally. David and Jonathan were united in comradeship and not only in friendship. It is important to remember that David and Jonathan met on the battle-field. At the critical moment in the history of Israel, when Goliath challenged the armed might of Saul, in the battle with the Philistines the prince and the shepherd became friends for life. Comradeship, born in the hour of danger and uniting men in despite of all divisions and boundaries that would ordinarily separate them, is one of the redeeming and encouraging by-products of that evil thing war. This fine spirit which has the moral power

to overcome differences of social status, of religion and race, is a surprising phenomenon in our world, which is torn with hatred and prejudice and in which people and nations find it so very difficult to understand each other.

The comradeship of the trenches and the battle-field requires an explanation. \*Jewish tradition offers us one. The comradeship of David and Jonathan was lasting because it was "Love that did not depend on Thing". And the same dictum continues: "Whenever Love depends on Thing, with the passing of that Thing Love too passes away; but when Love is not dependent on Thing, it will not pass away for ever."

What is this "Thing" on which so much stress is laid in this saying of our Masters, upon which so often Love does depend and upon which Love should not be dependent?

The Thing is social status, business and profession, money and material success. The Thing is not the person, it is not the man. And this is not self-evident. Unfortunately, there is great need for stressing this point, for the Thing is very often mistakenly thought of as the person. In times of peace a man is judged not so much by what he is as by what he has. The Thing, be it money or social influence, position or possession—the Thing, which one holds in his grasp, determines the status of a man on earth. In our civilisation too much depends on the Thing, too little on the person. A man is clever if he has success; he is respected if he holds office; he is trusted if he possesses securities. We have too much faith in the Thing, too little in character and personality.

It is the Thing that determines human relationships too. People associate in families, societies, and organisations—so we believe. In reality, however, it is one social status that associates with another of the same level, one group of interests with another, one bank account with another bank account of a similar weight and importance; in short— one Thing with another, but not one man with his fellow men. We have built up the power of the Thing. We believed that the more of it we held in our grip the more powerful

\*Mishnah Abot v, 16.

we would be. And now the Thing dominates us. It counts more than man himself. Friendship, love, honour, and influence are to-day all dependent on the Thing, on what a man has and not on what he is. The Thing has enslaved man.

The Thing stands between man and man, it separates nation from nation. Thanks to ingenious inventions distances are continually shrinking in our days; the distance between one man and another does not diminish. It happens very seldom that man meets man, that one heart turns to another, that one mind reveals itself to another, that person associates with person. The Thing stands between us and renders understanding between human beings almost impossible. Our associations of friendship and love are seldom lasting; they depend too much on the respect in which we hold the Thing and too little on the appreciation of the human personality.

Comradeship, however, is different. It emerges in circumstances in which nothing else counts but the man, and in which everything depends on character and courage, reliability and faithfulness. Out there in the trenches a man is judged by what he is and not by what he has. There the power of the Thing, the false magic of material possession and material success is broken. There, especially in the hour of danger, man meets man. Out of this meeting a lasting understanding arises that may well be called: Love independent of the Thing. In comradeship the dignity of man triumphs over the enslaving power of the Thing.

But comradeship should not be limited to service-men only. It is a message of the front line to the world. It is a programme for mankind. To-day I feel that the world is better prepared to accept the message and the programme than at any other moment in the history of man. After the last war, service-men on returning home were often disappointed. In the trenches they had learned that the standards of society are often false and meaningless. They came back with a vague conception of new values, with a deeper insight into what should really count in the world,

but the world at large had little understanding for the new ideas which were born in the hours of danger at the border line between life and death. Thus comradeship had to be confined to such comparatively small organisations as the Legion. There was comradeship between ex-servicemen, there was none, or only very little of it, in the world at large. To-day, the situation is different. It is one of the things giving hope for the future that comradeship is no longer limited to ex-servicemen. This total war has pushed the front-line as far back as the bomber can reach. Wherever a bomb can drop there is the front. Men, women, and children have learned to share the dangers of the battle-field and in the hour of trial they have re-established the moral dignity of man in a great new comradeship, the comradeship of the Blitz. The comradeship of the people of London in the long, dark months of the Blitz and the same noble spirit of mutual aid in which the other communities have met the trial of fire and blast in this country are among the most encouraging portents of a better day to come for all men. The comradeship of the Blitz has restored our faith in man. It has proved that man can be good, reliable, and faithful, that he can be a comrade.

Servicemen returning from this war will find a community that understands them, that understands the message of comradeship because having experienced the dangers of a total war it will have experienced the need for comradeship in its own body. Comradeship must become a programme for all mankind; it must become the great creative and progressive force on earth. Comradeship is a necessity of peace just as it is a necessity of war. Without it wars are lost; without it the peace will be lost too. Without it we are bound to fail. With it we shall overcome all the obstacles that stand in the way of world-wide understanding and harmony.

Comradeship alone can turn the brotherhood of world-wide suffering of our days into the great creative brotherhood of all men and all nations, working hard but not without success for a new dawn on earth.

## I

Succot is called "the season of our joy". It used to be a happy time of rejoicing. The hard work of a whole year done, the harvest brought in, the rich blessings of nature well garnered, man could relax. He could thank God with a contented and satisfied mind. But what is the season of our joy to-day? Where are the great harvests that used to make people happy? There is little "Simchah" left in a world in which Death has become the richest harvester. We have forgotten the meaning of joy. It is, however, important to realise that it is not only this war, with its small and great tragedies or the overpowering martyrdom of Israel in its wake, that has caused us to forget the meaning of joy. Long before its outbreak, true joy had left our hearts. Joy, happiness, harmony, contentment and peace left this world long before the present catastrophe. The generation of those born not many years before 1914 has never really known of these blessings of life. During the two decades between the two wars the world was in a fever. Many people worked, others were workless. Many fought for things which they could never achieve; for many there was success—in a sense. But the place of "Simchah" was vacant in the world. Where joy should be in the life of men there was emptiness, disillusionment and boredom. When people were not working and not busy chasing the mirages of their ambitions, they were not at peace, not happy, but bored. Mere entertainment took the place of joy, entertainment that one buys for money and that is an efficient means of killing time and making a man forget the void within him. A whole entertainment industry had to be produced in a world that, not knowing genuine joy, was bored.

## 2

How was it that joy vanished from the earth long before the present war?

\*A passage in the Midrash may give us the clue to this problem. Commenting on the words in the Book of Job "Where is wisdom to be found?" Rabbi Elizer answered: The head is the seat of wisdom; Rabbi Joshua answered, the heart. The Midrash supports Rabbi Joshua's view by quoting the verse: "Thou gavest my heart joy", adding the gloss that joy is wisdom, as it is said: "Be wise, my son, and my heart will also rejoice."

If this is so, then the lack of joy in our world points to a lack of wisdom. How strange this is. We have been accustomed to thinking that we have been the most enlightened generation in the whole history of the human species. From the height of modern achievements we used to look down superciliously upon past generations. Be this as it may, about "Simchah" they knew much more than we do. In spite of all our "cleverness" we have banned joy from the earth.

This is very strange indeed. When this modern period of great scientific advances opened, people were looking forward to the Golden Age of mankind, which seemed to be approaching. When the steam-engine, electricity, the Diesel motor were first discovered, they held out enchanting promises. The commodities of life would be easily, cheaply and plentifully produced. Man would no longer have to toil and to drudge from early morn till late in the evening for his piece of bread. The Machine would become his great help-mate. With its assistance the needs of all would easily be satisfied. A world of plenty was at hand. Bread for all, leisure for all, peace and contentment for all were within the grasp of man.

Such was the promise, and quite a reasonable one too. But what has become of it?

Those very creations of the human mind that could have

\*Yalkut Shimoni, Proverbs, I.

become the sources of man's happiness produced the curse under which humanity has been groaning in modern times. The Machine, instead of becoming a help-mate, turned into an enemy. Instead of securing leisure for millions, it made them workless and miserable; instead of creating a world of plenty, it has produced slums in a world of artificially manufactured scarcity. To crown all, in the present war the ingenuity of the human mind, the great achievements of science and progress, have had to be devoted to producing weapons of destruction. We are living in a world of the most stupid and the most tragic contradictions: man's ingenuity has destroyed man's happiness.

Looking at an aeroplane, for instance, and examining its construction, one cannot but admire the faculties of the human mind; but taking account of the uses to which this ingenious machine is put, one is dumbfounded by human idiocy and stupidity. And this is the strangest thing of all: that at one and the same time man seems to be both very clever and very stupid.

## 3

The Midrash quoted above seems to provide the explanation of these contradictions. According to Rabbi Eliezer the source of wisdom is the head, according to Rabbi Joshua it is the heart. Both are right in a sense. There are two kinds of wisdom: that of the head and that of the heart. And this is the difference between the two: with our head or intellect we create the practical means of living, with the heart we conceive the values of life.

Goodness, Beauty, Love, Ethics and Morals and Religion cannot be proved by mathematics or any other activity of the intellect, they must be experienced by the wisdom of the heart. Of the values of life we know with our heart, and if the heart does not know of them, our intellect is never able to create them for us. On the other hand, the practical means of living are devised by the wisdom that

has its source in the head. When man first produced a piece of bread, he did it with his brains and not with his heart. When the first machine was invented, man consulted his intellect and not the wisdom of his heart. But if man wants to know what to do with the bread, so intelligently produced, whether he should eat it himself or offer a piece of it to a fellow-man who is hungry, he must ask his heart. Once one has the machine, devised by human ingenuity, and wishes to know the purpose for which to use it, one has always to turn to the heart. We use the machine for a purpose that we desire, that we wish to see achieved in life, and we desire and wish and aspire with our hearts.

Thus, a man may be very clever and very stupid at the same time. He may possess wisdom of the head but no wisdom of the heart, or vice-versa, he may be a "fool" but with a heart filled with wisdom to overflowing.

Modern man has been such a clever-stupid type. He has brains but hardly any wisdom of the heart. He is rich in means but miserably poor in values. He possesses enough brain to run a factory but has no heart to "run" life. The wisdom of his head has supplanted the wisdom of the heart. He has been most ingenious in creating the means that could have secured mankind a blessed life, but he has not known how to use them well. He has been stupid at heart. This has turned the promise of the "Golden Age" into a curse.

A powerful human intellect combined with the stupidity of the heart has become the deadliest weapon of devastation the world has ever seen; it has created the most tragically idiotic caricature of man: the mechanised super-beast.

The grin of that beast has banished joy from the life of men.

A new and better world must mean new and better hearts. Mankind must learn to live by the rehabilitated wisdom of the human heart. Then alone will "Simchah" re-enter the life of men.

Joy comes of the heart that is wise.

## COMMON RESPONSIBILITY

*Rosh Ha-Shanah, 5703—September, 1942*

THREE years of a terrible war have passed over us; for three dark years we have witnessed the collapse of human civilisation. The whole framework of a world which we have already come to call the old has gone to pieces before our eyes.

It is natural that in the midst of such confusion and chaos, under the stress and strain of terrifying events, we should pray on the Holy Days for nothing else but a speedy deliverance from the nightmare of this senseless destruction of values, of life and human happiness.

But this is not enough. The nervous cry for help of a tortured heart is not yet a prayer. The soul of prayer is a new preparedness of the heart. And because of this, before we pray, we must think; we must try to understand.

This Rosh Ha-Shanah, which opens a year in which will most probably fall the decisive phase of the war, let us try to find our own place as Jews in this tremendous upheaval; let us try to define the Jewish attitude to the many problems of our times—and afterwards let us pray intelligently.

## I

For this purpose let us translate the basic conception of Rosh Ha-Shanah into the terms of our days. Rosh Ha-Shanah is the Day of Judgment, not only for us Jews, but for every living creature, for the whole of the Universe.

The detailed description which our Rabbis have given of the procedure before the Heavenly Court contains some strange and seemingly most illogical ideas. We are told, for instance, that first all the individuals are judged, next all the nations, and lastly the whole world. This sounds curious. Once every individual being has been judged,

what is the point of judging all the nations and all the world too?

The account of the procedure given by Jewish tradition makes the reason clear.

First human beings are judged as individuals. Their good deeds are counted, their bad deeds are counted, and judgment is passed. Then follows the turn of the nations as nations. The deeds of all the members of the nation are weighed, and if their good deeds weigh down the scale of their sins, the whole nation shall prosper; in the reverse case, however, the whole nation shall suffer. Next comes the turn of all mankind in the same way. All the deeds of all the individual beings of all nations are added together, and judgment is passed on all of them as one unit; for better or worse all share in the same sentence.

And because of this the advice is given to all men: \*"Every human being should always look upon himself as if his personal merit and guilt would just balance each other. And so should he look upon the world, as if it were half guilty and half free. Consequently, by committing only one sin, he may turn the scale against himself as well as the world, bringing destruction upon himself and the rest of the world: but if he performs but one good deed, he might save himself and the world, as has been said, "The whole world rests on the righteous."

But again you may ask: if the world is judged as a whole, what sense can there be in judging nations separately? Or if you judge nations, determining for each of them a collective destiny, what meaning can there be in judging individuals as such? And then, is such procedure just at all? Why should the group, the nation, the whole of mankind suffer because of the sins of individuals? Why should the righteous be punished as members of the nation together with the guilty? Or, on the other hand, why should the guilty benefit from the merits of the just and the righteous?

\*Cf. Maimonides, *Yad he-Cha-zakah*, *Hilchot Teshuvah*, iii, 4; *Talmud, Kiddushin*, 40 B.



The reply to these questions usually is, not to take the detailed description of the procedure on the Day of Judgment too seriously; to regard it as for the most part a fanciful production of Jewish folklore. This is a mistake. For the first thing which we notice on looking round in the world with open eyes is that the conception fits the facts. Whether it is just or not, we are witnessing day by day how the sins of individuals do affect whole groups, how the crimes of small groups are visited on nations, or even on the whole world. The innocent, the righteous, are punished together with the guilty. And the guilty, though on much rarer occasions, often benefit from the good deeds of the righteous. The reason is that every human being has a threefold destiny—as an individual, as a member of the smaller organic or functional group to which he belongs—the family, the nation etc.—and as a member of humanity.

A man may be a perfect "Tsadik" with nothing but good deeds to his credit, yet he cannot but share in the fate of the nation to which he belongs. And if the nation as such lives foolishly and is unable to manage its affairs competently and well, all will suffer within the nation, even the innocent; as all will benefit—even those of whom you may think that they do not deserve it—from a just and honourable administration of the group or the State.

In the same way, people may be relatively guiltless as a nation, as the Czechs were in the critical days of 1938 and 1939, as the peoples of Norway and Denmark were in 1940, as we Jews have been guiltless *as a nation* for the last 2,000 years, and yet they cannot but be involved in the guilt of the world around them.

We all live our own life in this threefold capacity—as individuals, as members of nations, and as members of mankind.

Individuals may be innocent, but theirs is also the destiny of their nation. Nations may be innocent, but theirs is also the destiny of humanity.

Our old traditions are right. We are judged as individuals, we are judged as nations, we are judged as mankind; and happiness or suffering, good or bad fortune, are the balance in hand that remains after the various destinies which are ours have found their equilibrium.

Judaism sees mankind as one organic unit, constituted by the smaller units of the individual personality, the nation, etc., whose own life purposes must be in harmony with the purpose of the whole. And if this is so, the basic principle of all human relationships, of social, national, international, universal relationships, must be common responsibility. Being a constituent part of the whole makes me responsible for the whole; it makes whatever I do affect my fellow-men, the nation, the whole of mankind. The good that I do is to the benefit of all, the evil that I perpetrate is to the disadvantage of all.

And because of this, owing to the common responsibility in which we are bound to each other, ultimately we are all responsible for all the guilt, for all the sin in the world; just as we have a right to claim a share in all the merits of the world. In other words: National-Socialism and Fascism became possible owing to the common guilt of mankind, owing to the evil that is in man—in all of us. But, on the other hand, Roosevelt, Lease and Lend, the awe-inspiring heroism of the common people all over the world, are due to the goodness that is in man, in us, in every one of us.

Whether I shall have a good year or not does not depend on me alone, whatever my merits may be; it depends on you too. Whether we all together in this Synagogue shall have a happy New Year does not depend on us alone, whatever our merits may be; it depends on the next congregation, the next and the next. And whether we in all our congregations shall have peace and happiness in the coming year does not depend on our congregations alone, but also

on what is being preached at this very moment in that church there across the road, and the next one, and the next. And so on, until the circle has been closed and all share in the destiny of all. In a deep and secret sense, all our neighbours, all our fellow-men, all mankind, are in us, and we are in them. As every cell of the human body in a mysterious way carries the mark of the whole personality and is in its own turn represented in the personality of the whole, so is the whole of mankind mirrored in every one of us and every one of us is depicted in the canvas of the whole.

## 4

What are the practical consequences of the principle of common responsibility?

In the life of the individual or the community or the nation it means that every one of us is the keeper of his brother. The sorrow of the brother, his pain, his hunger, his agony, his lack of happiness, his lack of freedom, his lack of friendship, his loneliness, accuse us and make us guilty.

In the life of the nations, in international relationships common responsibility means that neutrality is immoral, that non-interference is guilt and isolation a crime; for they all represent various forms of the refusal to shoulder common responsibility, they all are artificial attempts at splitting the organic unity of mankind.

The terrible tragedy of this war has come upon us because people and nations refused to acknowledge in their actions the principle of common responsibility; because artificial barriers were erected between man and man, between one nation and the other; because individuals, groups and nations thought of themselves as independent, sovereign, self-contained units. There is no happiness, no peace, no comfort in this world because everyone thought only of himself, of his own happiness, of his own peaceful and comfortable

life; because people and nations lived in the Cain-attitude of "Am I my brother's keeper."

"Yes, you are the keeper of your brother!" This is the message of Rosh Ha-shanah to-day to this tortured world, the message of the Day of Judgment on which we stand before our Heavenly Father as individuals, as nations, and as one humanity.

"You are the keeper of your brother" is the great message of God that reaches us through the catastrophes of our days. In all the awe-inspiring events around us one truth is illustrated again and again: the interdependence of all life on earth. This war is one terrible object-lesson in the theory and practice of common responsibility. And it can have but one end: a deepened sense of unity, of brotherhood, and at least the beginnings of a New World based on the realisation of common responsibility.

The ephemeral new lords of unhappy Europe who deny all this will be overthrown. And terrible will be the plight of those who stand in the way of the intentions and purposes of God.

Fear not. Have faith. Have courage. God cannot be defeated. \*"For evil-doers shall be cut off; but those that wait for God, they shall inherit the land. And yet a little while, and the wicked is no more; yea, thou shall look well at his place, and he is not. But the humble shall inherit the land, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psalms xxxvii, 9-11).

