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Not long ago a Rabbi in Miami, Florida, received a package from the Synagogue Council of America. The Rabbi had written the Synagogue Council telling them that he would like to obtain from them some of the religious symbols they had received from the Jews of Nazi Europe. Within this package, then, was probably one or more of these rel. symbols which had survived their human possessors. After studying the package for a few moments, the Rabbi opened the package and stared down at its contents, --a tarnished Torah plate and an equally unglamorous pointer. As the Rabbi lifted the Torah plate, its chain clanged and rattled. It seemed to him in the silence of his study that the rattling became magnified, and he imagined that he heard the rattling of the chains that bound our European brothers; he thought he heard the closing of furnace doors *being slammed shut* *Metallic Clang*

Then the Rabbi looked down at the Torah Pointer. ~~As~~ As a matter of coincidence, the Pointer faced directly towards him. The extended finger of the arm pointed towards his heart, and for a moment the Rabbi froze in his position. ~~WHY DOES THE FINGER LIE JUST SO- POINTED DIRECTLY TOWARDS ME?~~ He thought- Is it the finger of rebuke, or of some startling summons it wants me to meet? Or is it merely the finger of those whose property it ~~it~~ */if/ we /had/ rec* once had been?

If we had received ~~a~~ *such* a package, no doubt we would share the anxiety of the Rabbi. Yet, in a very real sense, we are always receiving packages from our brothers out of the past-. If we do not receive gifts in metal and cloth, we, at least, receive their legacy of ideas; their gifts of impassioned aspirations, and ~~half-frustrated~~ *their* accomplishments. In the end, strange to say, it is we who are left to interpret the meaning of their gifts. It is we who are left to make a joke or a crusade out of their ~~efforts and sufferings~~ *and* ~~and~~ *striving*. The finger of those who are gone always points at those who yet live.

How shall we respond to this challenge of six millions Jews who died because of man's prejudice and weakness? Shall we erect a monument to them, as the Jews of N. Y. City are trying to do, a monument that will cost ~~2-1/2~~ *2-1/2* million dollars? Shall we build a tombstone on Riverside Drive, and carve upon it the words, "In loving memory of our brothers who died needlessly"? Does this ~~really~~ seem to be ~~a fitting~~ *An adequate* tribute to them?

Are there not other ways that we can pay tribute to our lost brethren? Couldn't we build an institution which will be not a tombstone for the dead, but a school for the living? Couldn't we create an institution which will train young boys and girls to break down the barriers of prejudice in our world? ~~Wouldn't this be a more fitting tribute to the six million? Our brethren overseas~~ *They* were the unwitting victims of a world gone mad, a world of war and tyranny; couldn't we, in their name, work towards a program which will seek to eliminate injustice and work towards peace?

The Finger of the Future points as urgently to us - as the Finger of the Past.

You will note that I emphasize, "our present building", for anyone who has witnessed the jams which arise on Sunday mornings during the school session, even when we are operating on a double shift, can see that we must have in the immediate future, a school building sufficient to accomodate our children. Such a school building would cost about fifty thousand dollars minimum. Our permanent house of worship which we hope to build above this auditorium will cost an additional fifty thousand dollars. But of the permanent house of worship, we do not dare speak now. We speak only of the things we must have in the immediate future, namely fifty eighty thousand dollars to pay off the present structure, and fifty thousand dollars to build a separate school building.

If those who dared to start the erection of our present bldg. had ~~done so~~, anticipating that the original 250 families, and those alone would continue to contribute to the bldg. fund,

~~Prior to this year our~~ Those families who have contributed to our bldg fund under our pledge plan over a three year period, number about 250. ~~if we had anticipated that we alone would have to finance the completion of the bldg, we would never have started bldg.~~ The bldg. was begun as an act of faith - it was started 1) because of the tremendous need in our community for a Temple and secondly 2) because the founders were certain that those who came into the community and beheld the work we had done FOR THEIR BENEFIT AS WELL AS OUR OWN, - would want to pitch in with all the strength at their command. Those of you who are new may say to yourselves, a hundred thousand dollars, how can you get that much money out of a community of moderate income? But we who have held our services first in a fire house and secondly in an Am. Legion hall; we who stood before this spot on Elmont Rd, watched the derricks taking the sand out of the hole and wondered what would go back in its place; we can tell you that the hardest part of the job is over. The initial plunge, the initial investment of fifty thousand dollars has already been made, by people who had less reason to believe that their venture would be succ. than you have. Now these people who have started the project do not say to you here is the ball, I carried it this far, you carry it the rest of the way. We say instead - only put your shoulder under one wheel, and we shall continue along the way together. We shall continue to pledge more money alongside of you when our own pledges have been paid. And we can gain courage from the fact that just as there are now 450 families in the congr, we can expect a minimum of another 100 families and perhaps 200 families when the additional homes in Elmont have been completed. The time has come, dear friends, when those who have started the battle of faith invite your participation, especially since the battle is yours also.

The old man planting the tree, might have added one more statement in reply to his questioner, he might have added, "I have the faith that those who will live to eat the apples from the tree will take pains to water the tree and to till the ground". The old members of Temple B'nai Israel, ask its new members to justify this noble faith. ~~water the tree & till the ground~~

who are eating the apples & their labor

The finger of responsibility points - inevitably it points

memorial
your hand
We shall
rag nails
together
+ we shall
try
together
+ I mean
together
+ pray
together

of the seal of your

these
cups

The founders of this House of Judaism saw it as a bridge across the centuries - binding the aspirations of our fathers & martyred brethren with the hopes & goals of our children.

The founders of this House held out one hand to the dead - & ~~the other~~ ^{the other} hand to the unborn & those who were yet to move into the Community.
The Bldg was begun as an act of faith.

- my families saw this*
- 1) The founders of this House of Judaism saw it as a bridge across the centuries, binding the aspiration of our fathers and martyred brethren with the hopes and goals of our children. The founders of this House held out one hand to the dead, and the other hand to the unborn and to those who were yet to move into the community.

The bldg. was begun as an act of faith.

- 2) The people who began this living memorial do not say to the rest of us, here is the hammer and the nails, we have built this far, you build the rest of the way. Instead they say, only give us your hand, take up the hammer alongside us, and we shall build together. We shall tap nails together, and we shall learn the Torah together; we shall pray together and build upward together. We shall continue to work and give along with you.

Study

The old man planting the tree, might have added one more statement in reply to the question, "Old man why do you plant?" He might have added, "I have the faith that those who will live to eat the apples from the tree will take pains to water the tree and till the ground." The older members of Temple B'nai Israel ask the newer members, who are eating the fruits of their sacrificial labors to help water the tree and till the ground.

The finger - The past - The future

The finger of responsibility points inescapably at each of us. We have a responsibility towards those who are gone, and towards those who are yet to come. Let each one take up the rake and the hoe. *The hoe*

~~The message which the prophet Jeremiah had for the Jews who went to live in a new land in the 6th 2500 years ago, is intended for us as well, "Behold build ye houses and dwell in them; and plant ye vineyards and eat the fruit thereof, and seek the peace of the city wherein ye go, for in the peace thereof, shall ye have peace."~~

most

The/encouraging aspect of our Temple is that it is being built ~~by people~~, for the most part, by young people who ~~never~~ ^{For the most part have never} participated in Syn. life in their old communities. Most of our members cannot read Hebrew, know little about Judaism, have never attended Rel. Services, except on the High Holidays, and yet, they have turned to the building of our Syng. with a zeal that ~~knows no~~ ^{is} unparalleled. Although the ~~most~~ ^{majority} of our members earn no more than \$5,000 a year; and although we have no wealthy contributors, we have been able to erect the building we now call home ~~in the unbelievable space~~ on the basis of three years of activity.

- This Temple is a living memorial to three groups of people.
- 1). It is a memorial the the martyred Jews of Europe whose torch we have caught, and which we hope to hold high.
 - 2) It is a memorial to the present members of the Congr. who have slaved to build it.
 - 3) It is a memorial to future members of the Congr. who shall share its ~~privileges~~ program and facilities.

This Temple is a testimony ~~to~~ a covenant we the living have made with the dead. We shall not fail them, we shall plant spiritual seeds on the soil they have made fertile by their sacrifices. Our Temple is a testimony also ~~to~~ a covenant we have made with our children and with those who are yet unborn. We shall not fail them. We shall provide them with a fair chance to ~~create~~ ^{live} in a world of purpose and plan. An ancient story from Jew. lore tells of an old man, wrinkled and bent, who was seen planting an apple tree. Every day the man would labor over the little spot, tidying ^{PAKING} the dirt, watering it. Finally, one of the neighbors came to him and said, "Grandpa, why do you work so hard. You'll never see the ~~beginning of it~~ first apple from that tree." The old man smiled and replied, "I may not eat the apples from this tree, but my children shall." It is something of this faith which has inspired the founders of ~~this~~ ^{OUR} congregation to work and give beyond the limits of their physical and financial means.

The old man ~~planting the apple tree~~ might have added one more statement to his ~~reply~~. He might have added

^{on edifice} Those of you who are new to our community might ask, how is it that people of moderate incomes have been able to erect such a handsome building in so short a time? The device which our people have used is, at once, democratic and ingenious. Since there were no ~~people~~ ^{families} to donate a thousand dollars, we devised a system where each family could contribute according to its means. Some of the families pledged \$1 a week for a period of 3 yrs, others pledged \$2 a week, still others pledged \$3 a week for 3 yrs. On the basis of these pledges, the building was started, and \$46,000 of the bldg cost has been paid in this manner. The happy result has been that all families have been able to participate and no family has been able to dominate the politics or governing of the congregation.

~~At the present time~~, The congregation owes \$36,000 on the building as it ~~presently~~ stands. The estimated cost of completing the present structure is another \$22,000. ~~In short, we will need approximately \$58,000 more to be free and clear of our present building.~~

~~\$~~ 58,000 is needed to ^{make} the present bldg ~~stand~~ all over. We owe \$36,000 on new work done already. + the estimated cost of completing the present structure is another \$22,000.

Nothing that we can do can bring the life back to the bodies that lie in mass graves at Buchenwald, but we can carry on the fight of these people. Their dying cry was, "~~Stop the injustice, stop the killing~~; why do you kill us, why are you so cruel to us?" This is the desperate cry of every human being to every other human. Couldn't we, in the memory of those needlessly oppressed, try to accomplish what they failed to do, what they were powerless to do?

I am often reminded of a story that came out of the last war. Two soldiers were fighting side by side, when one of them was shot down. The other soldier immediately came to his side and tried to bind the wounds that were obviously fatal. whereupon the dying soldier cried, "~~Go on, go on, you are all that's left of me now!~~" And we are all that is left of the six million, and we must go on. We must try to accomplish what they could not. We must build a synagogue for every one which the Nazis destroyed; we must write a Torah for everyone that the Nazis burned; we must create two children for everyone that the Nazis buried. We must strike a blow for the good life which counter-balances the evil thrust of Fascism, and then go it one better.

I am proud to say that those who began the great enterprise that is called Temple B'nai Israel, Elmont, have seemed to be possessed by just such a burning spirit which is vital to the continuity of ~~Judaism and~~ the good life in our world. I venture to say, that nowhere in this great country of ours has a synagogue grown so rapidly; nowhere has a school program been conducted under greater handicaps ~~in this country~~; and ~~nowhere else~~ ^{in our country} has ~~so much~~ ^{been done} with so little. I cannot help but feel that if it were possible for the ghosts of Europe's dead Jews to survey our labors, I know that they would be warmed and enheartened. I cannot help but feel that we are establishing here on Elmont Rd. a far more appropriate memorial to the six million than are those Jews who are bldg. a tombstone on Riverside Drive. For while the tombstone builders are giving a name to a ^{synagogue} grave, we are creating ^{new} a body for a ^{new} soul, we are creating an instrument through which the hopes of the dead may pass and invigorate the lives of the living.

~~Some of you may know that when I was graduated from the Jew. Inst. of Rel. I was offered posts at two of New York's wealthiest congregations. I investigated these synagogues and I discovered such things as these: I found that a Jew could not possibly belong to these congregations if he were not earning a minimum of ten thousand dollars a year; so high were the rates of dues and fees; I found that the congregations studiously stayed away from the Temple on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings; I found that the cantors sang Brahms and not traditional Jew. themes; I found that the choirs were largely non-Jewish; and I found a restricted allegiance to doctrinaire and sectarian Judaism. I decided to come to Elmont, because I find none of these things here. I find that here, money is not king; I find that we are able to blend a love for Jew. tradition with a self-critical concern for progressive Judaism; I find a dedication to Kallal Yisrael, the community of Israel, and not to one closely defined sect of Judaism. Finally, and perhaps most imp't, I find here a concern not merely for the ritual of Jud, but a willingness to project its spirit into the community about us into the problems of nation and state, into the the real problems of justice and peace about us.~~

Build by love never end eye before