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“Life's Sacrifice and Service,” 1905 September 30.

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New Years Day,
Sept. 30, 1905.

Life's Sacrifice and Service.

The appointed Bible Lesson for New Years Day is the story of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac, his loved son. 'Tis a thrilling story, briefly and simply told. The old patriarch does not sacrifice his only child. God proves him, according to the Bible story - Abraham answers "Here am I". The Bible narrative is a protest against human sacrifice.

* The note of this festival is a prayer for life. "Inscribe us in the Book of Life" is sounded again and again. On the New Years day the book of life is opened and on the great Day of Atonement the judgment is sealed. Israel prays for life and desires to live, not because more than other men Israel is afraid to die, but the emphasis of Jewish teaching is strong upon life and upon life's obligations. Judaism is eager for life because it interprets life as blessing and duty, not as curse and punishment. Life is not a burden from which with joy we find release in death. Judaism is sane and sound in its view of life. Jewish thought and Jewish practice reveal full appreciation of the joy of living. Festivals are feasts of joy and none, not even servants of the household should be denied their pleasures. The Bible law commands us to rejoice. Judaism is neither esthetic nor epicureanism. It demands no surrender of the world. It invites no hermit existence; it teaches not that the desires of the flesh are sinful; neither does it exalt the pursuit of pleasure nor glorify the satisfaction of the appetite. Man is more than bone and flesh and blood. There are things higher than the lusts of the body. There are pleasures keener than food and drink. These are the deep joys of the heart, the delights of the spirit. Sneer if you will at the claim of power for the spiritual. Determine if you please the great decisions of life by a bread and butter philosophy. Measure and count the values of life in dollars and cents. The claim of the spiritual is imperative in the midst of the clamor and strife of the world. Spirit rules in the history of mankind.

Sacrifice is nobler than self-indulgence, and service is nobler than sacrifice. Willingness to sacrifice still distinguishes the great majority. Noble causes plead in vain for workers. Beautiful charities languish for want of support. With what effort must we ring sacrifice from the callous-hearted and close-fisted. Profit and pleasure are the rules of our lives. Few who wait to hear the call of the spiritual.

The observance of our festivals is in itself testimony of the willingness of sacrifice - Jews resting in the midst of the working world. Let us show public respect for things Jewish and for our Jewish Holy Days. Let those who will show themselves rude, uncultured and irreverent. Let the thoughtless and the ignorant parade their disrespect in public places.

Jew and Jewess, self-respecting, thereby win the world respect.

The story of Abraham's offer fills us with horror of human sacrifice.

I confess to feeling less horror at the story of ancient time than at the facts of the twentieth century. The god Moloch was created by ancient superstition. What of the Molochs of our modern enlightenment. Ancient Canaan sacrificed children. The world today sacrifices children in accursed and accursing child-labor - child sacrifice not to be excused or justified by superstitious idolatry, unless it be our idolatrous worship of the god of gain and of gold. This generation needs a modern Abraham's refusal to sacrifice life to the all-consuming Moloch of our age - our false gods of silver and of gold. This generation needs a modern Abraham's refusal to sacrifice life to the ~~We~~ have abandoned the ancient idea. All the more must we emphasize the idea of service. Service to God, instead of sacrifice to God and the gods, and service to God by service to man. Service to man, to better the lives of men, women and children, to advance the well-being of the whole human race; to help in the development and spread of a nobler fulfillment. You protest that you have no part in this great work. All have part in it, consciously and unconsciously. What does ennoble a civilization more than the life of individuals and of communities and of nations, the life of our families, the devotion of husband to wife and wife to husband, the obligations of parenthood and

the joy of children, the pleasures and the purposes of our home; the desires and delights of our hearts; the ideals and the conduct of our business; the moral standards and the moral judgment of our communities; the ideals of the nation, exalting righteousness and liberty and justice. This is the civilization in which we have a vital part. Choose the nobler rather than the baser life; the unselfish rather than the selfish; the life of the spirit rather than the life of the body; sacrifice and service rather than self-indulgence. Life's rich endowments are of the mind and of the heart and of the spirit. These distinguish us as men more than beasts. Serve God, not with lip service, not with vain prayers and empty words, not with service of custom - formality without vitality. Serve with the service of heart and of mind. Let heart be pure and thought noble and word truthful and conduct upright.

