

THE MIDDLE (M) SILVERMAN

RABBI SILVERMAN—A SERMON, TEMPLE EMANU-EL

SILVERMAN: Each day we struggle to uplift the wretched refuse who huddle ten to a room on the Lower East Side, aware of our American duty and privilege as Jews who have long called these shores our home. We advocate day and night that the restriction on the so-called polack, litvak, greenhorn!—that these quotas be lifted so that those unfortunates of our faith can escape the massacres spreading through Europe.

But none of us can live in a constant vigilance. And so perhaps we go to the theater for a little relief, to be in a community that laughs together—

And what is in the theater? What title glares its name in neon lights on Broadway?

The God of Vengeance! By Sholem Asch!

I expect scurrilous lies to my face from the crackpots who call themselves Christian—but to be hit by a stone in my back by a fellow Jew!

I am not unaware that there is a Jewish underground in our cities. Yes, there are girls who, in fleeing Vilna, Kiev, Galicia, without father or family, ply their flesh to buy their daily bread. Are there misguided girls among them who turn to each other in confusion? Of course.

Yes there are men who buy their bread on the sweat of these women's backs, rather than the honorable sweat of their own. Of these parasites I say: Send them back.

I know you have heard me denounce this play before. I acted on my words. I registered the complaint. And I am happy to tell you that as of last night, the play has been closed down by the Vice Squad, and all cast members have been arrested for obscenity.

Please join with me in prayer for a righteous verdict. It is now in the hands of an American jury. We ask that they defend our good name.