

JBC

Copy of speech made by Dr. Finkelstein on television on April 7, 1968

Martin Luther King's death deprives American<sup>n</sup> of one of its greatest spiritual leaders, and at the same time one of the most impressive and promising influences on the world. We had all hoped that as he reached his fifties, his sixties, and his old age, he would come to be recognized everywhere not only as a leader in civil rights, a spokesman for the Negro, but an American Ghandi, whose guidance to peaceful co-existence would be accepted by the peoples of Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Once he had fulfilled his mission in this country, to bring about full peace and co-operation among its different races, opportunities for similar and broader service would be available to him everywhere.

For the world needs today above all a spiritual leader, an effective guide through the morass of hatred and disdain which divide peoples and nations from one another. Our youth needs hope - hope which derives from effective action, guided by wise insights and great courage.

It is the loss of this hope which has brought dismay to so many in other lands, as they look over our country today, regarding its spiritual prospects as bleak. America has amassed great power - greater than any State in history. But in the process it has lost the spiritual vigor and leadership which it possessed in the days of its founding fathers. Dr. Martin Luther King was its opportunity to regain this leadership, as the moral guide of the World; precisely the same opportunity which Abraham Lincoln

offered in his day.

Is it not strange that both of these spiritual heroes of America, whose moral greatness transcended all differences of color, ethnic background, creed and nationality should have been cut down before their time, through an assassin's bullet.

"When a Sage is lost," asks the Talmud, "where can we find his replacement?" Each of the many tasks of Martin Luther King, Jr., will be assumed by others. But who can combine in himself all the moral authority, all the spiritual promise, all the wisdom, all the greatness, who had become concentrated in him, even before he had reached his fortieth year. America does well to mourn its great loss; the world joins it in this sense of bereavement

At the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, whose honorary alumnus, Dr. King was, and where we knew the promise which was in him, our hearts are broken. We extend to his bereaved wife and his children who are after all has been said are the main sufferers in this tragedy, our heartfelt sympathy. We are their fellow-mourners.