

JEWIS UNITE WITH GENTILES IN DULUTH IN GIVING PRAISE FOR BLESSINGS

Rev. Mendel Silber spoke of "Religious Separatism" at Temple Emanuel last night. He dealt exhaustively with the aloofness of the Jew in modern religious and social circles, declaring that it is exclusion rather than clannishness that causes this state of affairs. He said:

The Jew has for centuries been a puzzle to his surroundings. In past ages neither his history nor his religion was understood. The liberal spirit of our era, and the closer contact between the races have brought about a better understanding and a better appreciation of our history and religion, except in countries where a misunderstanding of these serves the greedy and blood-thirsty ends of an unprincipled and lawless autocracy and clergy. But though we are understood historically and religiously, socially, we are not as yet. The social coherence of the Jews, which exists in spite of civil equality, still puzzles the gentle observer, even of this most enlightened country, and age. To the theological mind it argues a divine purpose with the chosen, but temporarily rejected race. The philosopher finds in it astounding pertinacity of traits of character. Our enemies see in it a proof of secret conspiracy against the welfare of our neighbors; and the impression of the unbiased is that pride of race lies at the bottom of this strange fact.

The Ancestral Pride.
"Hereditary and ancestral pride," it is often claimed, "separates us from the rest of mankind." How strange that no one has ever thought of looking for the reasons in the accuser rather than in the accused! That we wish to preserve our religious separatism, that there are certain doctrinal teachings and traditions which we cannot share with other denominations, no one will indeed find fault with us, especially at a time when Christian denominations exclude each other and seclude from each other every day. For it is clear that if we Jews are to perform our God-given task, we must keep ourselves a distinct brotherhood.

To allow ourselves to be swallowed up by the nations, to lose ourselves in some other religious communion just as a river is lost in the sea, is to give up hope of aiding as Jews. In the conventional version of the world to religious truth and righteousness. It is true that we may throw in our lot with some other religious body, say the Theists or the Unitarians, with whose creeds our own has many points of similarity, and still work for the higher welfare of humanity. But then we shall do it as Theists or Unitarians and not as Jews. It needs only that every Jew should adopt this policy of assimilation for Israel to disappear and his life's work with him. It may be urged that no great harm will be done if this indeed does happen.

"What does it matter," it may be asked, "by which particular race or sect the great task is accomplished; what if Israel perish as long as God's kingdom comes?"

The Jews' Allegiance.

Ah, but the Jew owes allegiance to Judaism as well as to his task, just as every American owes loyalty not only to America's civilizing task, but to America herself. The Israelite who deems himself at liberty to forget his Jewish birth and efface his distinctive Judaism, is like an American who should throw off the ties binding him to his country and take the whole world for his fatherland. Moreover, our task as Jews is to bear witness to the true God, and to the sanctity of the moral law. Is it not clear then that this testimony must be especially effective when it is offered by a people knit together by the consciousness of being called by providence to render it; when offered by a historic people with its roots striking deep down into the past, with a unique record of continuous battle for the ideal? Is not the witness of such a people the most impressive that could be offered. Is it not best calculated to stir the imagination, and to kindle the respect of the world? To disregard our distinctive Judaism, therefore, would be to throw away all these great advantages.

Judaism Not Anti-Social.

Yet, even if we advocate religious separatism we cannot approve of social separatism. Judaism never was and never will be anti-social. The story of the Jew's life under the Romans, in Mohammedan Spain and in medieval Europe generally, shows clearly that the Jew readily consorted with his gentile neighbors whenever they permitted him. If he became anti-social, it was because society would have none of him. The Ghetto was not his making, and when he severed himself from the world it was only because he had been thrust out of it. And even today when the Jew attempts to quit his religion and mix freely with his neighbors, he is often repelled and unconsciously shown back to his own tribe; yet, if he keeps there, he is accused of hereditary and ancestral pride. How singular, indeed!

Talks of Social Separatism.

Another reason, perhaps an unconscious one, of our social separatism, is the ecclesiasticism which enters so largely into the formation of American society. Christianity, although not legally dominant, is yet practically so. Where the spirit has departed, the phraseology still remains. Everywhere the tenets of that faith are assured as beyond question, making conversation often embarrassing to the dissenting Israelite. No matter how much or how little the Gentile believes of the dogmas, their assumption does not incense him. He needs not guard against the charge of supineness and minority, if he fails to record his dissent. And it is not the dogma alone which enjoys such pre-eminence. The laws of morality, the motives of kindness, the graces of conduct, all these are marked with the device of the church.

I am not saying this in the way of censure, I am simply stating facts. Let the unbiased for a moment realize the feelings with which the Jew must bear every virtue under heaven—manliness, candor, love, humility, honor, forbearance, even charity and the sanctity of home—stamped with a name that degrades him and makes him appear a graceless intruder into the circle of the elect, and the problem of Jewish retirement will lose much of its mystery.

The Jewish Philanthropy.

It will then appear why the Jewish philanthropist does not at times take that personal share in the benevolent labors of his fellow-citizens which he is most willing and also able to bear. Where his money is welcome, his faith is proscribed. Dear and near to his heart as many of the efforts for the amelioration of a city's conditions may be, he can do no more than aid them with his purse, for he knows that his just sensibilities will not be consulted. We need not go any farther for an illustration than the Y. M. C. A. build-

ing of this city. I admit that often no insult is intended, but that does not take the sting from a reproach, pronounced or implied. And let no one plead long habit for extenuation, for if this be the reason, the time has surely come to conquer it.

It may be that we are to blame in some respects, for we Jews do not pretend to be blameless. But a fault is less reprehensible in a people that has suffered so much for the sake of its faith. Would that they who accuse us of clannishness and ancestral pride because of our separatism realize that it is for the dominant religion rather than for that of a small minority, to lead the way in this much desirable and much needed reform.

Thanksgiving day promises to be more than usually memorable from the fact that the Jews throughout the United States have decided to join with their Christian brethren in its observance.

While the Christian will feast and give thanks for the bountiful harvest and the blessings vouchsafed by Providence during the past twelve months, after the conventional fashion, the sons and daughters of Father Abraham will return thanks to Almighty God, express gratitude to the government of the United States for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, and the powers that preceded the government, for a period of two and a half centuries.

The present year marks the 250th anniversary of the arrival of the first Jews in this country, and although the exact date of their landing is unknown, it has been decided to celebrate the event on the last Thursday in November. While the Jewish observance of the day will be a national event, it will have its focal point in New York city, since it was there, in the quaint old town of New Amsterdam, that the refugees from the wrath of fanatical Christians made their first appearance upon our shores.

Dr. Mendel Silber Named.
Duluth in common with the other cities, towns and even hamlets where there is a nucleus of the sons of Israel to form a rallying point, is engaged in making preparations for the celebration. In this city Dr. Mendel Silber, rabbi of Temple Emmanuel has been named by the chairman, Jacob H. Schiff, the New York banker, to take charge of the local celebration.

There will be religious services, and a public meeting of a secular character at which Dr. Silber will deliver an address, historical and reminiscent, and the Jews will be called upon by their leaders to contribute of their gratitude to the country and the government that has done so much for them; that by the force of its example has shamed many of the other so-called Christian nations into a recognition of the claims of humanity as inseparable from those of Christianity.

There is some discussion of a plan to purchase a large tract of land and the establishment of a national park for the benefit of the people at large. Still another, and a more popular plan, is the erection and maintenance of a hospital with an endowment fund sufficient to provide for its efficiency so long as time shall endure. Still another plan is to erect a monument to the achievements of the Jewish people in the western world, and while the last plan will not strike the average citizen with the favor that goes with the other two, one cannot but pay tribute to these sturdy people who, in spite of the obstacles that have been constantly in their pathway, have gained a position in the very front rank of the financial and business interests of the country.

Some Jews With Columbus.

And what a struggle they have had. It may not be generally known that the first Jews to settle in North America came here not from Europe, but from South America. There were four or five Jews with Columbus on his voyage of discovery; of this there is ample proof, but it is not susceptible of proof that any of them remained here at that time; in fact, they could not have done so. There is also a dispute over the correctness of the story that Queen Isabella of Spain pawned her jewels to defray the expenses of Columbus, the claim being set up with equal vehemence and an equal degree of proof, that it was the Jews that provided Columbus with the means for carrying out his long-cherished plans which resulted in the discovery of the new world.

The sons of Abraham have always been the teachers, the philosophers, the sages and the prophets of the world, and it is not at all strange that Luis de Torres, one of their number, should have been among the adventurous crew that accompanied Columbus and acted as interpreter; it is even claimed for him that he was the first white man to set foot on the soil of the new world, where later so many of his co-religionists were destined to seek shelter.

First Party of Jews.

The first party of Jews to settle in this country came from Brazil, which country they were forced to leave in 1654. There were twenty-seven in the party, two being children. The vessel in which they made the voyage was the St. Catarina. Brazil, a short time before, had been reoccupied by the Portuguese, and the Jews had the option of leaving the country or becoming burned at the stake if they did not renounce their religion. They chose to be exiled.

They had a hazy idea that in the wonderful land to the north, about which they had heard remarkable stories, they would be free from persecution and might live in peace and according to the tenets of their faith. Their voyage to New Amsterdam was one of great hardship, and their troubles were not over when they arrived off the Battery, which then as now was one of the institutions of the new world.

In this connection it may be stated that during the past three years upward of 1,000 Russian Jews, strong, able-bodied men, refugees from the provinces of the czar, have been taken care of by the Hebrew Relief association of this city, and the public at large has been little the wiser. Most of these refugees have been men who have taken up their quarters in the Jewish district in New York with their families. Here they have been provided with work, and as fast as they established themselves they have been aided in sending for their families and are now numbered among the citizens. Others have been colonized in Wood county, where they have been provided with lands at a nominal figure, and some of them have in this short time erected substantial buildings, are managing well stocked farms, and are ranked among the well-to-do. And all this through the aid they received at the start from the Hebrew Relief association.

Fight For Equal Rights.

No sooner had the Jews become settled in New Amsterdam when the fight for equal rights began, but it was not until the middle of the eighteenth century that they were admitted to citizenship. Their first struggle was in establishing a place of worship. The

charter of patroonships of 1640 explicitly states that "No other religion shall be publicly admitted in New Netherland except the Reformed as it is at present preached and practiced in the United Netherlands; and for this purpose the company shall provide and maintain good and suitable preachers, school masters and comforters of the sick."—Ecclesiastical records, p. 110.

Another interesting record is that issued by the West India company June 14, 1656, permitting the Jews to establish a "quarter" in New Amsterdam. Gov. Stuyvesant had refused to register a deed given by one Tennis Crale, to the Portuguese Jew, Salvador d'Andral, and upon complaint being made to the company, the following reply was given:

"Honorable, Vigorous, Pious, Dear, Faithful: We have seen and heard with displeasure that, against our order of the 15th of February, 1655, issued at the request of the Jewish or Portuguese nation, you have forbidden them to trade to Fort Oranoe and the South river; also the purchase of real estate, which is granted to them without difficulty here in this country; and we wish it had not been done, and that you had obeyed our orders, which you must always execute promptly and with more respect."

They were not permitted to land at first because the captain of the St. Catarina claimed that the refugees had not paid for their passage. They were kept cooped up on the vessel for a long time, until at last the governor, Peter Stuyvesant, intervened. The Jews contended they had been ill treated and robbed by the captain, and that all their money was gone.

The governor permitted them to land but two of their number were sent to prison until the debt was discharged. Gov. Stuyvesant did not look with favor upon the little band of Jews. Neither did the Dutch colonists of New Amsterdam. They were considered a source of danger and they would have been summarily expelled had not the directors of the West India company, among the stockholders of which were many Jews, protested. Eventually the edicts of the West India company proving too strong for the colonists, the exiles were permitted to remain, but only on condition that they should always take care of their own poor.

How well they have kept that promise! They and their children! And their children's children, through the generations that have lived and died and lived again in the integrity, the faith of their fathers.

The name of a Jew does not appear upon the poor list of a town, city, village or hamlet in the United States.

The work of the Hebrew Relief association is a marvel and a wonder. It is an object lesson for the balance of the world. Surely and without ostentation it searches out the distressed and gives them relief. It is not conducted as a fad by a coterie of society's butterflies.

It gives no charity balls to recoup its fund. It is run along on business principles. Its results are evidenced by the work it has accomplished. The pledge given by the little band of 27,250 years ago is still being kept by the 2,000,000 Jews who inhabit this country today.

"Jewish or Portuguese people, however, shall not be employed in any public service (to which neither are they admitted in this city) nor allowed to have open retail shops; but they may quietly and peacefully carry on their business as before, and exercise in all quietness their religion within their houses for which end they must without doubt endeavor to build their houses close together in a convenient place on one or the other side of New Amsterdam—at their own choice—as they have done here."—Ecclesiastical records of the state of New York directed to Stuyvesant, 14th June, 1654.

Not For Public Service.

The first Jewish synagogue in the United States was situated on Mills street (now South William), New York City, and its minister was one Samuel Brown. The oldest congregation at the present day is Shearith Israel, which has a magnificent temple on Central Park west and Seventeenth street. The records of the congregation date back to 1728. From this period until the revolutionary war the Jews were following their own business in a quiet manner, but when New York was occupied by the British their patriotic feeling was stirred to its very depths, and the Rev. Gershon Mendez Seixas, as minister of the congregation, closed the synagogue, transferred its property from the city and called upon his flock to follow George Washington.

Throughout the struggle of independence Rabbi Seixas encouraged the Jews, who indeed had thrown in their lot with those battling for freedom, to stand firm.

After the war of independence the Jewish population of America began to grow rapidly. It was soon recognized that this country offered opportunities second to none, and that the refugees from persecution and oppression were always welcome. With the beginning of the nineteenth century Jews from England and Germany settled here in large numbers, and these were followed by arrivals from Russia, Roumania, and Galicia. The development of the Jewish communities has been something wonderful. The Jewish institutions from humble beginnings have become among the largest and most important in the country. True to the injunction that they should be "merciful sons to the merciful," they have never neglected to care for the unfortunate.