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“Cleveland, the Ideal City?,” 1913 February 25.

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CLEVELAND, THE IDEAL CITY?

Address of Rabbi Moses J. Gries

At the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, February 25, 1913.

At the Cleveland School of Art, Sunday, March 9, 1913.

I have esteemed it an honor to be a member of this Chamber through almost twenty years. With pride I have witnessed its growth and development in numbers and power and service for the public good. I have rejoiced in its thoroughly representative character, in its genuine public spirit, and in its unselfish leadership of Cleveland.

I am to speak of "The Ideal City." I have strong faith in the power of the ideal. Men and women should vision the best, and choose the best as the star by which to fix their course.

If the ideal city be in America, I suppose that we Americans will insist that the ideal city must be big. But if the ideal city is to be big, I ask you, how big? How big must a city be in order to be ideal? Will it be big enough if it has one million, or must it be two million, or five million, in order to be ideal? You and I know some cities that are big, that have a million or two million or five million of population, but they are very far from ideal. Something more than size is needed to make a city ideal.

There are those in Cleveland who, since the census of 1910, have been sounding the slogan for Cleveland, "A million in 1920." I believe it to be a foolish ideal and a mistaken ambition. Nei-

ther is it in the least likely. Our growth during the decade from 1890 to 1900 was at the rate of 46.1 per cent., and in the decade from 1900 to 1910, 46.9 per cent. If we grow at the rate of 50 per cent. during the decade closing 1920, our population will be about 850,000. Not one of the first six cities in the United States has ever sustained a like rate of growth for two decades. Are we to maintain a like or even a larger growth for three decades? Are we, in this third decade, to develop and to increase in population at the rate of 80 per cent., so that in the year 1920, we shall have increased 440,000, and have our one million?

Friends, if we blow like a braggart, if we blow the foolish bubble of "a million in 1920," rival cities all about us will rejoice when our bubble bursts; and then our steady progress, our real advance -- Cleveland is no boom city, we have always enjoyed steady, sure advance without booming -- our healthy growth and development will seem like bitter disappointment and be accounted failure because we will not have reached the one million.

The most celebrated cities the world has known, Rome, Athens and Jerusalem, perhaps not one of them ever reached one million in population; Rome, Athens and Jerusalem, cities that have put the deepest impress upon human civilization were never one million strong. We can cherish a finer, a nobler, a more honorable ideal. Rather than be a city of one million population,

let us be a city fit for a half million to live in, or a city which shall be prepared for one million whenever it comes. Let us not endeavor to be the biggest city, but rather the best city in the land -- the best city for men and women to live in, the best city for men of brains and enterprise, the best city for the wage earners, the best city for homes of peace and security and content, the best city for children in which to be educated, the best city for physical and moral health, the best city for intellect and culture.

The ideal city must be beautiful. There are some people who don't care whether a city is beautiful or not; they don't care as long as a city is what they call "a live town," hustling with the go-ahead spirit, as long as it is a city in which they can make money. Yet a city ought to be beautiful. Strangers always praise the beauty of a city. When we go into another city, we are always delighted with its beauty; we praise its charm and loveliness. The cities of Europe have invested heavily in beauty. Millions have they spent in order to attract visitors and tourists from all parts of the world. Investment in beauty has paid them splendid dividends.

Time there was when Cleveland was known as the beautiful "Forest City," when the fame of Euclid Avenue was worldwide, and people from across the seas came and wanted to see Euclid Avenue, in Cleveland, in America. If we are wise, we will endeavor to re-

create a Forest City more beautiful than ever in the past.

Let us begin at the gates of the city, whether we come by land or by sea. Let us make the portal through which we enter beautiful. Let us invite none to enter our city-home by the back door or the rear alley. Our own homes have beautiful, and our business places imposing front entrances. Let not the passer through, as the train halts in the Union Depot, turn to the conductor and say, "What place is this?" and when he receives the answer, "This is Cleveland," endeavor to peer through its smoky atmosphere and in the darkness of that dungeon say, "So this is Cleveland!" The railroads that enter Cleveland, in justice to the city that enriches them, and the city, in fairness to the railroads which serve it well, should unite to secure for Cleveland a noble gateway to our city.

Through that noble gateway into the city, may the traveler soon come out upon the Mall, surrounded by a Group of Public Buildings that will give real distinction to our city. Fifteen or more years ago, when first we dreamed of a Group Plan, many criticised and some condemned. I rejoice to say that during those fifteen years sentiment has changed. Today all the people of Cleveland eagerly await the realization of that beautiful Group Plan. Cleveland was the only large city in America that had to build all its important public buildings. The dignified Federal

Building and the beautiful County Building have now been completed. The City Hall is building. Other great public buildings will rise upon this Mall. The Group Plan will distinguish Cleveland among the cities of America, and among the cities of the whole world. Perhaps a future Emerson will say of Cleveland, as Emerson said of Athens and the Parthenon, "Earth proudly wears the Parthenon as the best gem upon her zone."

No city is ideal in which Literature and Music and Art are homeless. No city is ideal in which we have been waiting twenty years for a noble Library Building in which might be nobly housed a noble collection of books. Case Library and the Public Library live and work in unworthy environments. In an ideal city they would be joined into one great library, to be a real university for the people.

No city is ideal in which we have been waiting twenty years and more for an Art Museum. Oh, yes, the stakes are driven and the posts are standing in the park, and the time seems not far distant when we will have an Art Museum in Cleveland. I trust it will not be a mausoleum of art, but rather, with the School of Art, a living educator of the art taste and the cultural life of the people.

We of Cleveland have been waiting twenty years for a Music Hall, for a temple dedicated to the cultivation of beautiful

Harmony, for a Convention Hall in which might be held great exhibitions of the Industry and Commerce of Cleveland, in which the people might gather for inspiring civic celebrations.

I am waiting to hear the names of Cleveland's rich men, multimillionaires or millionaires, of the men who have made their fortunes in Cleveland, or through Cleveland, who will write their names upon Cleveland's roll of honor, sharing their fortune with the city and the people that have helped to enrich them.

I suppose, first, I should have spoken about life. You can't do business in a city unless the people live. The ideal city must be a city in which people will live and not die, and not be too soon cut off. Read the death rate of some of the cities of America -- 15, 20, 25 and 30 in the thousand. Some cities of America have a death rate of about 30 in the thousand. What a disgrace to a great city. It seems almost criminal to sacrifice human life needlessly and wastefully. Among the large cities of the country, Cleveland, we are proud and happy to say, has the lowest death rate. But do not forget that Cleveland's death rate has been lower and should be lower still; in Cleveland, every year, men and women and children die from diseases that are preventable, from diseases preventable that ought not to be prevalent in this community.

What think you of an ideal city in which the water is "unfit to drink," of an ideal city in whose newspapers you may read a

daily advertisement and proclamation to all of Cleveland and of northern Ohio, and to every traveler that passes through it, that the water of Cleveland is unfit to drink, although here at our door is the boundless reservoir of the Great Lakes?

Life in cities grows more and more difficult, more and more dangerous; as the millions gather in the cities, life becomes more complex, and because of ever increasing complexity, all the conditions of life are made more difficult and more dangerous. If the millions are destined to live in cities, they must have pure water, and not contaminate it; they must have pure air and not defile it; and we, who believe in ideals, should not rest until that shame is removed from our city. And it ought not be, pure air and pure water for the rich and the well-to-do who live under the favored conditions of life, but pure water and pure air and decent conditions of life for the poorest in the city -- pure water to drink and pure air to breathe indoors and out-of-doors, pure food, unadulterated and uncontaminated. What the ideal city needs is an intelligent and a fearless administration of the laws of health and sanitation.

I believe strongly in conservation, but more strongly in the conservation of human life than in the conservation of the earth's resources. I believe that the whole United States should be stirred -- but not only by disasters and horrors, when here

and there and everywhere lives are lost; that the whole nation should be roused, but not only when there is a mine disaster and human beings are entombed within the very bowels of the earth and brave men risk their lives to ~~save~~ them. Calmly and passively day after day, we behold human lives cut short and destroyed.

We ought to safeguard human life, on the streets, at the grade crossings, in the stores, in the factories, in the workshops, in the theaters, in the churches, in the picture shows, in the schools, conserving human life as the most precious of human resources -- far more precious than mines of coal and gold and silver, than wonderful titanic water power, than all the wealth of virgin forests.

I suppose you do not expect to hear anything from me about business. Nevertheless I desire to emphasize efficiency. One of the forgotten factors in the high cost of living is inefficiency. I appreciate fully the wonderful organization of the mighty corporations which serve the public. I marvel constantly at their startling achievements. Nevertheless I question are conditions ideal in Cleveland? Have we solved our problem of transportation? Have we efficient street car and interurban service? Do you approve of a double telephone system, and a quadruple express? Are the telegraph and the postal facilities up to the highest standard? Are light and heat and power distrib-

uted as we would like them to be? I doubt it. Conditions with us are no worse and perhaps no better than in rival cities. But I ask the plain question, are we securing for Cleveland, its people and its business, the best, the most efficient, the ideal service? I think not.

Our city life is not ideal until the tools of the community, the machinery of city life, are at their highest efficiency. If the tools of the community, if the machinery of the city be out of order, it means loss of time, of energy, of money -- a hindrance to all our life. If they be in good order and smooth-running, it is the greatest help to all who live in the city. We ought not to be satisfied until here in Cleveland we have the highest efficiency in all our public utility service and in all the departments of the city.

A stranger said to me today that he does n't remember any other city of the standing of Cleveland that has sidewalks and streets as dirty as Cleveland's. It is a shame to Cleveland. But we have not money enough, so they say, to clean the streets, have not money enough to pave the streets properly. There is not a single thoroughfare from the East End to downtown where pavement is in a first class condition. We have not money enough. So also we have not money enough for the very first duty of government -- not money enough for the police and the fire depart-

ments, not money enough to safeguard human life and to protect property, as they should be safeguarded and protected. That cannot be in an ideal city.

If there be crime in a city, it must be controlled. Crime uncontrolled spells a challenge to civilization. I know how difficult it is to deal with vice -- how difficult in every great city is the vice problem. I do not demand that we suppress vice and crime; not until men and women themselves are ideal, will crime and vice ever be suppressed. But if we cannot suppress them, then at least we should repress them; crime and vice should not flaunt themselves in our very faces. Cleveland has a character to maintain; a great city must be jealous of its reputation for honor and for decency. We of Cleveland claim to be a community of law and order and moral decency. Let us so maintain it.

Thus with the administration of justice. Our courts should be distinguished for character and capacity; the whole administration of justice in Cleveland should be upright and wise and unafraid, in order here to implant deep in the heart of every man and woman and of every boy and girl, respect for law and obedience to authority.

Business men are not interested in money alone. Business men are eager enough to make money. They want to be successful, they want to achieve. Every man who has succeeded, who has made money and is making money, is eager to feel that he, himself,

somehow, is of some value to the city in which he lives, and to the people of that city. Money is not the only thing in the world. Money is the symbol of success -- it is the crown which is awarded to the victor in the fight and in the race.

In no country of the world is money given as generously as here in America; by no people is it spent as freely. We do not value money for itself alone. There is no country in the world where sympathy goes out more freely to those who have fallen in the fight, who have failed in the race, no nation among the great nations in which men and women are more willing, nay, eager to help their fellows who have not succeeded.

Yet, here in America, in the heart of what we call enlightened civilization, see the vivid contrasts -- in every great city witness the persistence of misery and want, vice and crime, behold broadcloth and rags, side by side on the public streets.

Oh, if I could take you for an hour's trip, not through the beautiful streets of Cleveland, not through the palatial residence districts, but through the heart of the city, that you might see how the poor of this city live! You would discover that even in Cleveland, boasting that we have no slum district and no tenements -- that here in Cleveland human beings are living in hovels so filthy as to be almost unbelievable. Self-respecting wage earners are fighting the hard battle of life. They want for themselves and their families and their children, all the decencies of life.

Cleveland is not the ideal city and cannot be until we have no slums and no tenements, the breeders of physical disease, and of moral plague and pestilence.

We welcome the establishment in Cleveland of the new Federation for Charity and Philanthropy. This Federation for Charity and Philanthropy should mean more to Cleveland than the mere collection and distribution of more money. It should accomplish the coordination and cooperation of all the social forces of our city -- the development of our highest social power, and the application of that power and its utilization with highest efficiency. It should create in Cleveland a unity of social purpose, to solve the social problems of city life. Seriously we set ourselves to the duty, that here in Cleveland none shall want and none shall suffer and none shall hunger, and that we of Cleveland shall help our poor to help themselves, not in dependence, but to independence.

Oh, the millions of money that are poured out in America, generously given to charities and philanthropies round the whole land; what glorious societies we have established, what noble institutions we have builded! But, how we would like to feel, we men and women who give our money, that we are not pouring out our millions into the bottomless depths of an ocean of misery, but that we are helping toward some constructive upbuilding of the life of the poor towards a better chance for them, and es-

pecially for their children. If rightly supported, the Federation inaugurates a new era in the history of American cities.

There is no ideal city in which there is not a well planned, thoroughly organized and wisely coordinated system of schools and education; a system of schools that leads from the kindergarten through all the grades, through the college and the university. Education means leading out the best in us to the best and noblest in life. How we of America ought to rejoice that our public schools are open to all, that every child in America has an opportunity for education; that we of America are not like those governments whose despotism fears a thinking people, and therefore denies education to the millions of the peasantry. We believe so thoroughly in education, that not only are our schools open, but education is compulsory upon all. And I look forward to a time when our schools will be more than schools for the children of the land, but when every school-house will be a social center for the whole neighborhood.

Education is a failure unless it prepares boys and girls to do the work of the world; and, whatever be their work, trains and disciplines them to do it well. We of America believe in the public schools because we believe that every boy and girl should have a chance to rise. No man with the true American spirit wants to stay down forever; if because of adverse conditions or because of limited power, he himself stays down, he wants to kindle in

his children" the hope that "springs eternal in the human breast." He wants his children to have a chance. It is not a leveling down. It is a leveling up.

If a city wishes to be a leader among the cities of the world, if a nation desires to win supremacy among the nations of the earth, supremacy and leadership will come to that city and to that nation that have the greatest power, the highest capacity for doing the work the world needs to have done.

We are an industrial city. Let us educate our boys and girls for efficiency, so that if they go into our industries they may qualify either as workers or as captains of industry. Let the stamp "Made in Cleveland" mean the guarantee of quality and the impress of intelligence. Let it mean honestly and skilfully made, made with intelligence, with the suggestion of style, and with that touch of taste which transforms a block of marble or a mass of iron into a work of art.

I suppose an ideal city ought to have a large population, ought to be rich in its prosperity, ought to have the best service from its public utilities, ought to have an efficient administration in all its business departments, ought to have a splendidly organized system of schools, ought to have Art enshrined in a glorious museum, and Literature and Music beautifully and nobly housed. A city might have all these and not be ideal.

It would not be ideal unless it has one thing more. A city is not ideal until it is a free city. It must be a free city -- self-governing; free -- from legislative shackles which enchain the free-will and action of the people; free -- from the political bossism of political parties, and from the domination of selfish privileged interests.

The people of Cleveland or of any city are not free until they are really self-governing; as President Faunce of Brown University well said, "The inactivity of the best means the opportunity of the worst men." That explains the failure of so many of our American cities -- the inactivity of the best has been the opportunity of the worst men. We have failed in our American cities, not because we are incapable of self-government, but because never seriously have we set ourselves to the business of governing ourselves. We will not be free until we accept earnestly Lincoln's message to America -- government must be of the people, by the people and for the people; government of the people, with the consent of the governed; government by the people, by a free electorate, either direct or through honestly chosen representatives, who shall be not the rulers but the servants of the people; and for the people, not for privileged interests, but for the people, for the life and the well-being and the interests of all the people in the city, with justice to all. Our own Mayor Baker has very aptly said, "The freedom of the city is the salvation

of the nation." The nation will be saved when our cities are really free.

Cleveland is a peculiar city. Its population is one-third foreign. We have a cosmopolitan citizenship, coming from fifty countries and from all the continents of the earth. We have a polyglot population, speaking forty-seven different languages, according to the United States Census of 1910. Let us endeavor to make our cosmopolitan citizenship and our polyglot population render useful service as workers in every field of human endeavor. Let us help them to fill an honorable place in American life. Let us learn how to utilize their strength and to develop their finest possibilities. How true is the thought of President Butler of Columbia University, in his address before the University of Copenhagen, concerning the immigrants who go to America, --
are
those who go / enkindled by "imagination and energy," who seek in America a better opportunity for themselves and their children, who hate oppression and tyranny, who believe in and love liberty. Let us of America learn to develop their working power, and to inspire these thousands and millions to useful citizenship.

We should not encourage, nay, we should frown down, we should make impossible, in Cleveland, a little Italy, or a little Hungary, or a little Russia, or a little anything else. Our city should be one big America. Let us endeavor to create a unity of spirit, emphasizing always the things which unite the people,

and not the things which divide. Let us inspire this cosmopolitan citizenship, this polyglot population, by civic ideals, with love for city; by American ideals, with love for country.

I have great faith in Cleveland -- I have lived here twenty years. I have faith in its future as a great business center. I need not emphasize for you its business advantages. Cleveland is said to be the natural meeting point of the ore coming down the lakes and of the coal adjacent to our city. We have natural advantages which make Cleveland one of the chosen cities of this land.

But I have faith in Cleveland because I have faith in the character of its people, in the spirit of the city, in the power of its manhood and womanhood. Cleveland will not be the ideal city if it aims to be like Jerusalem, or Athens, or Rome, or if it aspires to be like one of the world capitals of Europe -- Paris, Berlin or London. Cleveland may, in the next few decades, rise to the rank of the fifth or even the fourth city of this country -- perhaps never will Cleveland pass or equal Philadelphia or Chicago or New York; but in your lifetime and mine, Cleveland may become really the first city in America!

First in freedom, the first city in America in the independence and character of its citizenship; the first city of America in the public spirit of its people, in the cooperation and the enthusiasm of all for public service; the first city of

America in high aims and in just purposes; the first city in the spirit of the people of all classes, in which the rich and the poor, the workers with brain and with brawn are joined together to build a city of justice and good-will; the first city in which there shall have been effected a union of all the civic forces, in which all believers in good government fight together, not as against, but with one another, in order to establish the good government in which we all believe.

I am strongly impressed with the conviction that we of Cleveland should organize a Commission to survey our field; to study the needs of Cleveland; to investigate what achievements are possible for us; to sum up all our forces, commercial, industrial, civic, educational, social; to make possible the realization of our strength and the revelation of our weakness; to give us the clear vision of our opportunity and therefore of our obligation.

Cleveland can live up to this ideal. No one organization can do this work alone. We can lead. We can inspire. We can direct the enthusiasm and the power of the people. We need in Cleveland the spirit of cooperation -- the cooperation of men and organizations now divided by secret antagonisms and sometimes by open opposition. We need the union of all our civic forces. We need the enlistment of the people, awakening their pride, their ambition, their enthusiasm towards the achievement of the noblest

ideals of the city.

I see before me men who have made a success in life. It is because they have made a success that Cleveland is a successful city. Men who succeed are usually men of power; their power may be limited in kind, but they are men of power. Electric energy is stored up in men. It is the nation's greatest resource. We men and women who are the builders of the city, the constructive forces in the development of the nation, have stored up in us this electric energy, this wonderful human power that can transform our city, our nation and our civilization.

You have stood by the side of Niagara and have been enthralled by its beauty; perhaps a vision of the power generated by Niagara's falling waters has gripped your imagination. This power has been running to waste for centuries. Now man would harness it to his wonderful chariot. I speak figuratively. I would not destroy its beauty. May the glory of Niagara continue from generation to generation as one of the wonders of the world!

In human beings, a Niagara of human power has been running to waste, century after century. There is no power greater than human power -- most wonderful, most powerful of all in the world. The machinery is standing ready, waiting for the motive power, waiting for you, waiting for human enthusiasm, for human energy, waiting for the electric current to thrill into motion and action. If you apply the power in you, men and women of Cleveland, Cleveland may be the ideal city of America.