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**MS-53: Moses J. Gries Papers, 1850-1934 (bulk 1890-1930).**

Series D: Sermons and Addresses, 1893-1917, undated.

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“The Great Cause - Union and American Israel,”  
1917 January 14.

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An extract from an address (The Great Cause - Union and American Isreal) by Rabbi Moses Gries, on Sunday, January 14, 1917, at The Temple, East 55th Street and Central Avenue.

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I wish today in closing to speak a word of tribute to one of our own American leaders, who this week past was privileged to live out the three-score and ten of which the psalmist spoke. Seventy years long has Jacob Schiff lived and been privileged to live, to be a distinguished leader in American Isreal. We honor him. We pay the tribute not because he is a philanthropist of world wide renown. Not because he is a philanthropist who has given generously of his fortune. Sums that run into hundreds of - yes, millions of dollars. Not only because he is a philanthropist whose beneficiaries are sowide spread and so very wise, but also because he has been a philanthropist who is a connoisseur of literature and a patron of the cause of education. We honor him as a philanthropist because he is one of those who has had the vision and the knowledge to look thru a microscope at literature and to understand the needs of education. If we in America are today blessed with a Jewish enclyopedia. If there is soon to be published a new English Bible translation. If presently there is to be given to the world a series of Jewish Classics, it is due to the wisdom and the beneficence and the leadership of Jacob Schiff. And in the cause of Jewish Education, the Semitic Musuem at Harvard stands as his contribution. The Jewish Theological Seminary, the Hebrew Union College and the Teachers Institute

are all due to his beneficence and wisdom. The Bureau of Education in the City of New York shows a little of that touch of the vision of Jacob Schiff. Jacob Schiff a reformer. Jacob Schiff a member of reform temples. Jacob Schiff a member of Judaism and identified definitely and absolutely with our own American viewpoint and yet with vision enough to believe that the solution to the problem of the Jewish immigrant is to create other leaders for those incoming hosts of immigrants, that they, here in America, may find leaders qualified to serve and lead them. We do well to pay tribute to Jacob Schiff in recognition of the nature of his distinguished service to the Jew and to the Jewish cause.

I remind you not always has he been praised. I remind you that Jews as in the days of the Bible, when the leaders of Israel turned against Moses and Aaron. Blamed it upon Moses and Aaron that the new ruler was increasing their labor and making their life more and more severe and more rigorous. So there have been times in American Israel and not far distant from the present day, when they said he was trying to dominate and to rule in Israel. Lord Rothchild in England, Nathan the leader of the German Hilfsverein, and the leaders of the Israelite Alliance of Paris, and the leaders in the various countries, have all had the same experience. All of them in their turn attacked and criticized by those who would not be led. They called them the court Jews. Sneered and ridiculed those who stood in the favor of the court and would sneer at their influence with the ruling dynasty or with the prince, when they tried to use that influence for the benefit of the Jew. I remind you that Jacob Schiff needs no honors from the hands of American Israel. He is one of the foremost, visionary, energetic of the world's sons. And to him has come the fullest recognition by the present world. And yet in spite of it he was steadfastly and intensely Jewish. Well we need to remember that. That Jacob Schiff did not



deny his Judaism like many another. He did not hide his Judaism nor minimize it. He did not put the "soft pedal" on his Judaism, believing it to be diplomatic, as some say. More diplomatic in his relations to the world with the "soft pedal" on his Jewishness? Very easily a few drops of baptismal water could have transformed and carried him over the border line, so very near and so very narrow, into the first society that he too might have been a leader of fashion and his children leaders of fashion, in this American world. But Jacob Schiff was staunchly and steadfastly and intensely and loyally Jewish. He was not ambitious for place. That is not the explanation of his Jewishness. He needed no signified approval from American Israel that he might be a representative of the Jews before the world or before America.

Jacob Schiff was a true champion of the Jewish cause. He was a true defender of Jewish rights whenever Jewish cause and Jewish rights needed a champion and defender. He went out to seek his brethren. He did not forget his brethren in the far distant lands of Europe. He dared in times of crises to lift his voice and to act also, even against so great a power as Russia. And he could have closed his eyes. He might have silenced and stifled his conscience for business' sake, since he was a international banker. But it is due to his courage and to his loyalty that to this very hour the Russian government is not popular in the financial circles of America. And also I need not remind you that Jacob Schiff was not too rich to be a Jew. There are some Jews - or rather those who are born of Israel - who are too rich to be Jews. When they grow rich and have abundance, they forget their Jewishness. Jacob Schiff has never been too rich to be a Jew, nor has he ever been too busy to be a Jew. Though absorbed in world affairs as important as our own. Absorb-

ed in great undertakings as compelling as yours and mine, he has never been too busy to be a Jew. He has given to the whole world and to all of America, a splendid of what a Jew may do, who is a Jew from earnest conviction and from true loyalty. A great lesson I would take from his life.

He has been a banker, a Jewish banker. One of those Jewish bankers that we read of in anti-semitic books. Those Jewish bankers who seek to dominate the nations and to rule the world and who by the throwing together of their financial power would lay down the law to the nations. He has been a Jewish banker - the Jewish money lender if you will, or money broker if you will. Being all those, he has given to us and to the world the fact that the Jew is not materialistic. That the Jew is an idealist. For Jacob Schiff through all the years of his life, practical, shrewd, hard-headed business man that he has been, combined all these with his practical wisdom and judgment and idealism. He, banker, money lender, and money broker, has stood for all that is American. Not a man whose whole thought was given to things material, or after the pursuit of the material, but rather as a man who stood for the high and the fine and for the ideal in life in America.

One final sentence. Jacob Schiff has been a staunch and true American. He has believed in America. America has been his great hope and his great ideal. He believes in the principles of America. Believing in the principles and ideals of America, he has had the faith and the courage to live as a Jew; a Jew sincere, loyal, yet treasuring and honoring the ideals and the beautiful traditions of the past. Loyal to the best of our history through these thousands of years, and wishing

here in America to transplant the seed of our Jewishness. Judaism here shall flower out in the land of freedom to such color and beauty, and to such reality of life, as it never has been privileged in lands of the east - perhaps. And so from his life each one of us may take the lesson. Not one of us too rich. Not one of us too busy. Not one of us too absorbed in his own life pursuits that he shall for one instant forget that the great cause for the Jew, is the cause of freedom. That though it be hastening, perhaps not in our day, that at last, after these thousands of years of oppression and persecution and injustices, there shall at last come human rights and freedom for the Jew and for all subject races and nationalities.

Finis.