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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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4	7	21

“America and Zion,” 1904 October 30.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
American Jewish Archives website.

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The love of Zion is ~~historical~~ among the Jews. Ever since Jewish princes and nobles were exiled from Judea and carried into Babylonian captivity, Israel has yearned for the restoration. Jewish history practically begins with the promise to the Patriarch Abraham to possess the land which God would show him. The Hebrews in Egypt came out from slavery with the hope that they should possess the land of their fathers. Through the days of the Judges and through the years of the Kings, Israel's history is a constant battle for the possession of the Holy Land. The Jews loved their country and were valiant in its defense against all foreign foes. With heroism, perhaps unequalled in history, they fought the Assyrian hosts, the Syrian invaders, and even the all-conquering Romans. After the conquest of Judea and the destruction of the Temple, again and again Messiahs arose in Israel to restore the sceptre to Judah. Jews scattered everywhere throughout the world, struggling against the cruelty of the church and the injustice of the nations, steadfastly longed for Zion.

With freedom and justice the hopes of Israel were transformed, and the hearts of the Jews turned, not upon the land of their fathers, but to their real fatherland - wherever they dwelt. Many Jews ceased to teach the idea and abandoned altogether the thought of a return to Zion. The day of the destruction of The Temple ceased to be commemorated as a day for lamentation and observed as a day of fasting. The American Rabbinical Conference of 1869, in which were gathered the ablest Jewish teachers and leaders of American Israel, declared that Israel's Messianic goal is not the restoration of the Jewish state and its seclusion from other nations, and further proclaimed that the destruction of Israel's independence to be the fulfillment of Divine purpose in sending Israel out into the world.

"A new movement - "Zionism" - has been borne in Israel, proclaiming to all the world that the Jews are a nation; that they desire to live in their own country as a united people. With all emphasis we declare, the Jews are not a nation. The Jewish Nation has not existed since the year 70. Thousands upon thousands of Jews

have abandoned altogether all desire for the restoration of the Jewish state. Jews born in America are not born members of any Jewish nation. They are born Americans, and thousands upon thousands of those who were born in the different countries of Europe desire not to be members of a Jewish state. They belong to the American people. We Jews are Americans, heart and soul.

The fundamental evil of Zionism, is its insistence upon Jewish Nationality, and its practical confession, nay almost proclamation, that the Jews are alien in the land of their birth or adoption. Jews have always protested against being regarded as foreigners and aliens. Successfully, in country after country, they have struggled for their rights, until disabilities have been removed, until they have won recognition and equality before the laws of the land. Jews, with all their power, must demand the right to live, the right to full freedom in the land where they are born, their actual fatherland, and the day must come, if we are to believe in the progress and civilization of the nations, when countries like Roumania and Galatea, and even Russia, will no longer refuse to obey the judgment of the nations, and will grant life and freedom and justice to the Jews who are members of their nation.

Zionism emphasizes the union of Israel, implying that it is a nation within nations, a people among peoples. Israel is, and always has been, a unit against the persecution of the world; is, always has been, and, I trust, always will be a unit in the defense of Israel's unfortunate, persecuted brethren. The Jews of the world, however, do not desire to establish and to strengthen and to perpetuate a unity of Israel as a nation. We do desire a spiritual unity. One unity is the fundamental unity of Jewish history and Jewish literature - the unity of the Sh'ma, "Hear O Israel, our God the Eternal is One".

Jews have shared fully in the whole of American life. They were in the colonies before the Republic was founded. They fought and bled and died in all its wars. They toiled and served and sacrificed through all the years of peace.

The Jews of America and the Jews of the world believe that America is the land of freedom, welcoming the persecuted and the oppressed; the land of justice, hating all injustice and tyranny. Jewish thinkers and teachers believe that Israel is destined to undergo physical regeneration and also a religious and spiritual rebirth. Its destiny is finding its fulfillment, not in Palestine, and not in Europe, but here in America. Jews believe that America is a nation seeking to establish justice here and throughout the world, by precept and principle and by example to teach men that freedom to all brings happiness to all. America seems destined by its own history and its own life to realize the fulfillment of ancient Jewish ideals. No nation in the history of mankind has approached more closely and accomplished more nearly the Messianic hope and the milennial thoughts of the great Prophets of Israel.

Jews will help to make America great. America is our country and the country of our children.