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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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“Tenth Anniversary Sermon,” 1902 November 23.

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November 23, 1902.

Please return copy to Rabbi Moses J. Gries, 45 Oakdale Street, City.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY SERMON.

Ten years have passed since I began my ministry in Cleveland. Ten years are a very brief period in the history of the human race. A decade is as naught, compared with the forty centuries of Israel's life. But ten years may mean very much in the life of an individual, or a congregation, or a community. Within ten years, one by one, the old pioneers have been borne to their last sleep. Not one of the founders of our congregation is with us today. The builders of our community have been compelled to surrender their task to younger and to stronger hands. Within ten years, how many we have laid to rest! How many youths and maidens have been joined in holy wedlock! How many of our little ones have been born into the world! The children of ten years ago have come to be young men and young women--some of them with homes of their own. Ten years may mean everything to us.

Our congregation is little more than a half century old. Forty were its years of preparation, looking forward to the Land of Promise. Ten years ago we crossed the Jordan. We have lived ten years of unceasing work. We have been rebuilding and building. Our work has been reformative and formative. Glorious indeed is our record. Nowhere in the world, in the annals of Jewish congregations, has there been an equal growth in the number of membership and in the hosts of eager school



children. With honest pride, we might honestly give voice to our exultation. Success has been ours!

Undreamt of success has been ours. But how much remains to be achieved! How far we stand from the real goal! Success has not come to us easily and without effort. There have been discouragements and disappointments enough. Who is not conscious of those who ought to have been and who ought to be with us as helpers and workers, who through ten years have done and are doing nothing, or very little?

Our ten years have been years of work. We have measured our work by results. We have striven to accomplish definite ends. Number and strength are ours--wonderful growth--marvelous increase. Is it for good or for evil? Are we witness to the increase or to the decrease of reverence? to the strengthening or to the weakening of devotion? Is loyalty as true, as earnest? Are Jew and Judaism respected more or less? Is the spirit of our people developing toward good or toward evil? Your honest answer to these plain questions is the real measure of our work.

I take a personal pride in the true religious spirit which rules in The Temple--which opens the gates of The Temple to all who would worship with us, and the portals of our school-rooms to all who seek religious instruction. We welcome the poor and the rich. The doors of The Temple swing open to the

poorest among us, and in all the classes of our school are the children of the rich and of the poor. We make no false distinctions. Thus is expressed the noble, honest religious spirit of our Temple. ~~The~~ the real test of my work, and of your work, and of all the work of The Temple is in the spirit of our community. Compare and contrast them with what was and what is. Compare and contrast what is in other congregations and in other cities and what is here. Understand the spirit which is in our men and women, our young men and young women and our hundreds of children.

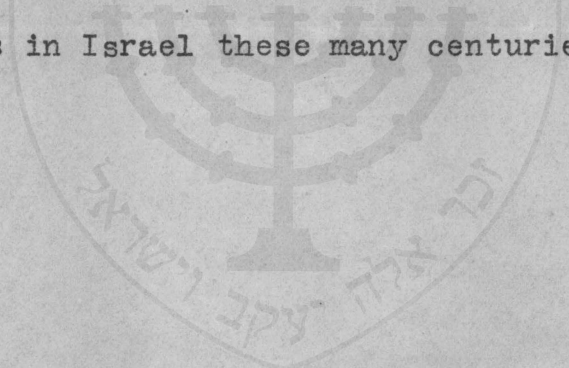




Thirteen years ago, I chose for myself the guiding text of my ministry. It was the text of my life in Chattanooga, and I have striven to make it the text of my life in Cleveland. The words of the prophet Malachi: "The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found on his lips: he walked with me in peace and uprightness, and many did he turn away from iniquity. For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is messenger of the Lord of hosts." <sup>P</sup>Rabbi means "my teacher"-- teacher to preserve Jewish knowledge. <sup>all important are</sup> ~~Not forever~~ textual readings and rabbinical interpretations. <sup>^</sup> We have not followed always in the traditional way of our ancient and honored rabbis. They served in their land and generation, and we must serve in our land and generation. Not all-important <sup>are</sup> decisions concerning ancient law and custom; not all-important are opinions and the weight of authority. Life presents itself under new conditions, unknown in any previous age. Our generation stands face to face with life and life's problems.

As rabbi, I have sought not only to preach, but to do; not only to preach and to do, but to lead and <sup>to</sup> <sup>^</sup> inspire others to do. My voice has been lifted on behalf of truth, and against unrighteousness. I have sought peace and the establishment of uprightness. By honest word and by honest life, I have <sup>and</sup> endeavored to lead men, <sup>^</sup> women and children to the good, and to turn them away from the evil and the degrading. I have battled for righteousness in our city. I have striven to further the

cause of justice and of freedom in the nation. I have tried to do an honest work in the cause of uprightness. I have searched for the truth which exalts ~~the~~ <sup>our</sup> souls. I believe my life has been pure, as the rabbi's life must be. I have not been all things to all men. You have never had cause to wonder whether I was flattering you with honeyed words. It has been my purpose, in an age of much insincerity in every walk of life, to compel you to respect the rabbi for his honesty and sincerity. I have endeavored to deserve your respect as he should be respected who bears the honorable title of rabbi, with the honor and dignity of the historical office held by the best and purest souls in Israel these many centuries.





I feel that I have the right, as never before, to call upon every man, woman and child to go forward with higher purpose--to battle for our great cause. We are under constant fire. We must not shrink from the unkind sneer, nor falter because of ~~the~~ unjust judgments. We will not retreat nor surrender. Unkind sneer and injustice should but make our loyalty the more intense, and deepen the sense of our personal responsibility. AMERICAN JEWISH

Claude Montefiore in England rebukes his fellow Jews because of energies and activities and enjoyments unsanctified, unhallowed, shameless and unrestrained. With truth, he declares that no materialist is coarser and more selfish than a Jew materialist--that no one can neglect religion with greater danger to himself and to society, than the Jew. There are some Jewish materialists who have dedicated their whole lives to business. Justification is there in the charge, when some give seven days to business, and not one day, nor part of a day, to the uplifting influence of the spiritual. The worldly toil and struggle of every day are honorable and useful enough, but they do not lead men to think the best thoughts. Through them, men are not moved to the highest impulses, nor because of them is life inspired by the purest purposes.

Montefiore calls it <sup>a</sup> a profanation of The Name, that any of Israel, who should be witnesses of God, dare to be

materialists--unworthy descendants of the Lawgiver and the Prophets--the moral Lawgiver and spiritual leaders of mankind. Here is revealed the current conviction and the accepted picture of the Jew. You declare with passionate protest: "It is untrue! It is unjust!" What will you do about it? What are you doing about it? How will you answer the untruthful charge of an unjust world? Answer by standing for the things not material. Answer by manifestation of noblest work and purest pleasures. Answer by revelation of hopes and purposes and of life spiritual, and not material.

We Jews, like other human beings, are not perfect. We betray our human weaknesses, and lower and higher instincts and impulses are struggling for mastery within us. Let the Jew be true to his better self. Appeal to his nobler nature. If possible, his life should reveal a moral purpose purer and higher than that of his fellow men. He must stand always for the best. I remember the idealism of ancient Judaism amid debasing heathenish beliefs and practices. I remember that through all the ages, and especially when passion and licentiousness and brutishness brought the dark ages upon mankind, the Jew stood steadfastly for his moral law. I remember that today, in an age and generation that too lightly esteems the marriage vow and violates the sanctity of the family, the Jew proclaims as of old the law of holiness and purity. Home is his sacred altar. I have faith in the triumph of his better



nature, and supreme faith in the ultimate triumph of the best among us. All Israel is living witness to the enduring power of the spirit. Physically, he was overwhelmed by Assyrian hosts and Grecian phalanxes and Roman legions; ~~but~~ spiritually he has triumphed in spite of the physical oppression of the centuries.

How will you answer the world, to prove that the Jew is spiritual, and not material? The Temple is the symbol of our spiritual power and purpose. Let its service be Jewish, and its sermon be Jewish: its service Jewish, in accord with the traditions and the history of the synagogue--in harmony with the synagogues of all the world--its service the expression of <sup>Israel's</sup> God's relationship; its sermon Jewish in spirit, articulate voice of the Jewish conscience and soul, ~~if~~ <sup>the</sup> Jew by the appointment of history is the prophet of the righteous life.

We need not be unJewish: but we can be thoroughly Jewish and be in accord with the best and the truest of all time, and with heart and soul, fight against all that is mean and unworthy and false.

Fifty years and more, our Temples have stood. Almost a thousand years stood the magnificent temples of Solomon and of Ezra and of Nehemiah. Almost two thousand years stood the humble synagogues of the exiled Jew--witness to Israel's spiritual life. This Temple is our only public witness to our

Judaism. What it has been in the history of humankind, what it is and what it will be--here we proclaim what the Jew has wrought for the development of our human civilization--what he is--and what he must be.

Two great purposes are mine as a rabbi in Israel: first, to lead the Jew to his Judaism and to put Judaism into the life of the Jew; and secondly, to lead the world to the understanding of Judaism and to establish our Jewish principles as the moral law of mankind. ~~The~~ misunderstandings and false interpretations must be explained, <sup>and swept away</sup> The age-old calumnies must be forever silenced by the power of truth itself. Mankind must be taught to know that Judaism, mother of religions, is a living religion for a living Israel, which shall include all nations. And the Jew must be made conscious of his great historical heritage. He must awake to the recognition of his supreme life purpose. Judaism must become conscious of its historical message. It must awake to the recognition of its supreme duty to the world. The Jew, by the appointment of history, is champion of God and messianic prophet of the triumph of righteousness and the establishment of justice.