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“The Future of the Temple,” 1902 November 29.

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

November 29, 1902.

### THE FUTURE OF THE TEMPLE.

The temple is the living witness to a spiritual, and not material Israel. It should be more than a witness and a symbol. The temple is the living representative of the synagogues of all the centuries. It is the heir to and the herald of Israel's ancient message. We of this generation, who are privileged to live in the most wonderful age which the world has known, should live worthy of the blessing and prove ourselves worthy of our opportunity. We should give a moral uplift to the human race.

The temple stands for some definite principles--also definite policies. We have always been a progressive congregation and in the forefront of the reform movement. Noteworthy within recent years has been the approach to a real Sabbath. The title has become more real to us. We have lost something of symbolic impressiveness, but we have gained much in the understanding of the Law. Judaism has become more real to us. We know it concerned with life more than with death. We had a Sabbath without Sabbath rest or Sabbath holiness. We have a Sunday Sabbath with worship, and more a Sabbath of rest to ourselves and our children. The Sabbath was for mankind--not so much for the Sabbath day, as for the Sabbath rest. The rest became worship--through worship the upliftment of the spirit--



and the whole purpose of the Sabbath is freedom. The Jews to-day are wrestling with the Sabbath problem. We need a re-creation of a Sabbath of rest and of worship and of upliftment and of freedom.

We believe that Judaism must live for the future, and not for the past: not for the past, but for the present. We are the link to bind the past to the future. Therefore we must live Judaism in our generation. The trumpet call is still to advance, and not to retreat--forward to the future, and not backward to the past.

The temple has some definite policies and methods which have often been criticised and condemned. We believe in the open door of opportunity to all. We prefer suasion to force. Far better is voluntary allegiance than compulsory affiliation. Some spiritual leaders are so spiritual, they sneer at statistical tables, as they call them, and politely insinuate "there is no value in figures." We wish to work intelligently--with our eyes open. We desire to know what we are doing and accomplishing. It is good business sense in every undertaking to know whether we are advancing or declining. Surely it is not better to grow less, rather than more; to stand still, rather than to progress. They condemn statistics and figures most, whom statistics and figures condemn. What real progress is there, if after years of service, congregation and school number the same or less, when all about are hundreds of men and women and a thousand children unaffiliated? Magnificent buildings stand in many communities, not living monuments,

but mausoleums for the dead.

We believe there should be no divorce between the so-called sacred and secular. All honest work and honest life is religious. It is false and foolish logic to declare that that work which is splendid and attractive and delightful, and merits nothing but praise, in a Young Men's Christian Association or club or settlement, becomes evil and deserving only of condemnation as soon as it enters within the temple walls. The "Open Temple" has brought us strength and life and power and religious interest and enthusiasm. What is the record of the temples which might truly be called "the closed temples?"

There is not a community in which there are not hundreds of men and women who are un-templed. And what shall be said of the religious interest of the young men and young women, and how many hundreds of children are untouched by religious influence?

The temple is a splendid plant physically, and the congregation has wonderful possibilities in its men and women and children. It is like a great engine, magnificently built, with wonderful power for good. The engine stands unmoved and not moving. It needs steam to set the driving wheels in motion. The temple and the congregation need spiritual power to set their machinery in motion. The temple should be the force for the better life. It is our social center. It helps us to think the best thoughts. It guides us by the purest principles.



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It leads toward the highest truths. It fills our life with high and honest purposes.

We aim to bring Judaism to the Jew, and the Jew to Judaism. There are thousands born of Israel--some of them of our own members--who do not set foot within temple or synagogue throughout all the year. They offer insult to the temple and to our Jewish cause. We ask no charity for ourselves. Are they members for the time of death and for the right of Jewish burial? If they desire not to live and work and worship with us, why should they be so eager to sleep their last sleep with us?

The future is destined to change the whole attitude of the individual and the family toward the temple. None will feel himself forced to contribute. Few will be anxious to get their money's worth. All money that is spent for religious and philanthropic work should achieve results. Unfortunately, thousands of dollars are vainly spent every year. I believe the time is coming--although it is not near at hand--when members will esteem it a privilege to have part in a great and unselfish movement for good and will be eager to be enrolled as voluntary workers for a noble cause. Men and women will join with us because our convictions will be their convictions, and because our work expresses the highest purposes and hopes of their life.

If there be Jews and Jewesses who seldom or never attend a place of worship, and if the day of worship be impossi-

ble for rest, and the service be in an ancient tongue not understood, and with manner and custom foreign to our civilization,--then the responsibility is with us. But if the temple be open on a day possible for rest, and the service, though traditional, be dignified and intelligible to all, and the sermon be addressed to life and to duty,--then the responsibility is altogether with the absent ones.

I have no faith in a race Judaism. I believe we are a religion, and not a race, and not a nation. But even if we were both race and nation, I would have no faith in a race Judaism which would be different from the religions of the world protesting against the injustices of the world, defending the race Jew from and against all other peoples, and which would be content with that--content with Judaism for the Jew. There must be more Judaism to the Jews, to every one who belongs to us: not the negative religion, declaring what we do not believe--but the positive religion which affirms our convictions and principles of life and conduct. Religion is a part of human life and of human hearts. It is not abstract thought. It is not religion for the sake of religion. We have too much Judaism for the sake of Judaism--to preserve Judaism--to perpetuate it to the last generation --forgetting too much the life of the Jew, present in every generation. The Judaism of the temple is a religion which men can honestly believe and honestly live--honestly believe without mental reservations--without unsound



interpretations of the Bible and of history--and honestly live without false compromise. The temple will live to see a new spirit born in our congregational life and work, and become a power to organize the religious life and education of our whole community--instead of congregational divisions and rivalries, to create congregational union and co-operation.

We aim to proclaim Judaism to the world, that our fellow men and women may know and understand and readily interpret and appreciate our Jewish principles and our Jewish history. The Jew can best teach the world the value of his Judaism by living it. Supreme with us are duty and service. The Jewish outlook upon life is from the moral view-point. Out of Israel came the moral emphasis. We of today, if we be Jews in the truest and best sense of that term, must feel ourselves called to duty and to service: must interpret life and the world ethically, and must ever speak the ethical emphasis so necessary in our generation. True Jewishness is unselfishness. Righteousness and character are of value more than gold and silver. Because of our Judaism, we should know and grapple with the problems of life. More especially, from motives most unselfish, we should seek to solve our own Jewish problems. What manner of Jew is he who can forget the poor or deny himself to his persecuted brethren? or fortunate, shut his eyes and his hands and his purse to the unfortunate? If we desire the world to appreciate the power of a living Judaism, we must

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do our full share of the great world's work. The temple has a daily duty to men and women and children, and its men and women and children have a daily service to render on behalf of our city and the nation. Through it and through its work must come a betterment of the world for ourselves and for others.

The temple of the future will reveal its real success in the spiritual power and the religious lives of its hundreds of men and women and its thousand children. It will be Jewish in spirit, and the Jewish heritage will not be esteemed of small value. It will be American in purpose--American in self-sacrificing devotion to the furtherance of true liberty. Our homes will have finer aspirations and ideals--homes will be strengthened and not weakened. We shall develop a stronger race of men and a nobler race of women. Our sons and daughters will be better prepared for life's sacred obligations, and fathers and mothers from the temple fount will drink moral cheer and moral strength. They will be happier, and stronger in the face of the difficulties and perplexities of life. Jews will give example of simple and upright lives. They will be happy in the consciousness of their own well-doing.