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“The Need for Social Service,” 1902 December 14.

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PLEASE RETURN COPY TO RABBI MOSES J. GRIES, 45 OAKDALE ST., CITY.

December 14, 1902.

THE NEED FOR SOCIAL SERVICE

Our civilization is not ideal. Hundreds of thousands live in habitations unfit for human beings. Hundreds of thousands are compelled to slave to keep body and soul together. And who shall tell the story of shame of the hundreds of thousands ^{of women} who sell their honor to satisfy the lust of man?

We are all part of the great nation, and of the still greater world. The poverty and the wretchedness and the disease and the crime of the slum centers of our own great cities and of all the earth are a danger to us all. Their poison permeates the life-blood of a whole nation and of all the nations. Supreme is the truth that the present happiness and the future wellbeing of a nation is dependent upon the happiness and wellbeing of all.

I speak first of the social service to be done through money. We cannot do much without money. The old thought was that a man could do what he pleased with his money: "I earned it, I will spend it." The new thought is Carnegie's "Gospel of Wealth:" "Man is a trustee, and money is in his hands to be wisely used." Men have not yet learned this gospel. The average man gives unwillingly and ungraciously. Rarely do we meet with the generous spirit, asking "What can I do with my money." Most people are eager to get as much as possible and to

give as little as possible.

The gospel of wealth is not a law to the rich alone. Some are waiting until they can give thousands and millions. Every person of moderate means should give and do his share. Many who are able to give escape their burden altogether. With right and with justice, we brand that man as selfish--as not worthy of respect--who will not bear his share of the world's burden--who refuses to do his duty by the community.

Some men have a genius for money-making--they know how to earn. They do not know ~~always~~ how to spend. They know how to save. They do not know how to give wisely. Give while you live, is the great principle which should command our attention today.

The prosperity of the United States, with American freedom and American opportunity is a standing encouragement to immigration. The thousands of Europe are crowding into our great cities. The centers already congested, are becoming more congested. Our own Ghetto problem grows not less but more difficult. Congestion means danger. Men and women and children have been crowded together, and conditions of life in some cities approach the danger point. The old safeguards of morality are being broken down. Tendencies are manifested which were unknown in Israel before. We must see conditions as they are. We must not shrink from the truth, however unpleasing it may be.

Says someone, he is not an alarmist. Conditions with us are no worse than in other congested districts. I believe

it. They are no worse--they are no better. How bad and how good are the conditions in the slum centers of our land? The truth be told: There are human beings, thousands upon thousands of them, who are compelled to live more miserably than our favorite horses and dogs and cats in our own homes. It is blindness to shut our eyes and our minds, to sit comfortably in our splendid homes and to announce our faith that "things are ~~coming~~ all right with the world," or "things will surely come out all right." It is a very comfortable ~~conforming~~ conviction, and conscience-easing. I have faith that all will yet be right with the world. I am not an alarmist. But I know some of the terrible facts ~~concerning~~ how men and women and children labor and live. The facts themselves are alarming. The world will never be right if men like ourselves shut our eyes to the truth, which is plain enough. We must work for the better and truer civilization. We must give money and ourselves to help human beings up on the way of life.

Human sympathy is natural to man. If we are human, we feel within ourselves the natural impulse to reach out the helping hand and to speak the sympathetic word. In the school of life, we have learned to stifle our natural impulses. We hear the appeal of distress, and we seek the easiest way to get rid of the cry that rings in our ears. The easiest way is usually not the best way to help a fellow being. Money is necessary, but we must give more than our money: we must give ourselves. We should make our lives of some value. Ask yourself the question, Are you doing anything for your fellow beings? **P**I believe in the higher social service. Every gift with

which we may be endowed, every talent with which God hath blessed us, our powers of mind, and our qualities of heart and soul, are all trust funds which we must rightly use. Selfish is the man who hoards knowledge and accumulates culture for himself. Selfish is the man of brain and of heart and of soul, who is of no value to others. What value is there in higher education that gives the larger outlook upon life, unless it ~~gives to us~~ ^{makes} a larger human sympathy and deepens our sense of human obligation? Every educated, cultured man and woman is under divine appointment to do what he or she can to better the world. To the moral, there is the duty of moral leadership, and to the religious, there is religious obligation to their fellows. Men and women of character have necessary concern with the character of the lowest and meanest in all the city.

There are a thousand opportunities for social service-- each one according to his power. The great underlying principle is ever the same: Give to others the opportunities we seek for ourselves and our loved ones. Remember that those who have fallen lowest, who live in hovels surrounded by all that is repulsive, are human, like ourselves.