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“Israel's Destiny,” 1904 December 7.

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## "Israel's Destiny"

Every new altar dedicated to God, by Israel, is a new witness before all the world of Israel's age-old life, age-old faith, and age-old victory. The years that pass are witness to the number of Israel's years. Contrast Israel's four-thousand years with America's four-hundred years! Israel is forty centuries old, the United States but one century. What people has so ancient a history, what religion so ancient a law! Forty centuries of life - forty centuries in touch with the history of nations - forty centuries close to the very heart of civilization.

What memories it speaks to the thoughtful, and what warning to the thoughtless. Memories to the thoughtful - Israel knew the mightiest empires of human history - Chaldea and Egypt, Babylon, Assyria and Syria, Greece and Rome. Israel lived amid a civilization buried thousands of years ago, which has waited these long centuries to be rediscovered. Read the history of the world.

And warning to the thoughtless - a warning to all who see Israel living today amid the great nations. Remember the age-long history of Israel, and pause before you pass judgment upon Israel's destiny.

The world declares Judaism a dead religion. We ourselves lament that Judaism does not vitalize the life of the Jew. The Jew, born of a race that has lived and died for religion; the Jew, founder of religions, the world's teacher of moral law, is not religious in faith, in thought, in life. What of the future? What of Judaism in the days to come? From without, speaks the judgment, - Judaism is dead. From within, sounds the cry, Turn back! American Judaism has developed in the wrong direction; reform has gone too far - it has failed; therefore, indifference and neglect.

Judaism is not dead, and the future of Judaism will witness no turning back from the way which American Israel has chosen. Orthodoxy, with its laws and customs

and ritual, and more especially with its spirit, is not destined to be a world religion - will never be the religion of the future for Jew and non-Jew. Judaism, arrayed in its oriental wrappings, molded by middle-age persecutions, is unfitted for occidental life and the spirit of occidental freedom. Those of Israel who today are crying "Turn back!" who today emphasize most strongly traditional and historical institutions and customs, fail truly to interpret the signs of the times - they misunderstand the spirit of this age and <sup>this</sup> generation. Not backward to the past but ever forward with eye and heart and soul to the future. Judaism must be face to face with life and life's problems. Its deep emphasis is not upon renderings of texts of the Bible, nor upon interpretations of the laws of the rabbins, but on the moral law and the moral problems.

Let the Temple be the living center, the sender of power and of light to our homes, the inspirer of life, the uplifter of Jewish spirit and of Jewish ideals. From the Temple should stream forth the moral force which should bring uplift to the human race. I believe in the open Temple, to be a social center for us, the not poor in fortune; as the social settlement is the center for the poor in fortune, disadvantaged by the circumstances of life. We, the not poor in fortune, not disadvantaged by worldly circumstance, are often too poor in spirit and in idealism. Here in the Temple, let us be moved by purest feelings, here think the highest thoughts. Here let life be inspired by principles honest and purposes unselfish.

The Temple is a living witness to a spiritual and a not material Israel. It is the visible witness and representative of all the altars and Temples and synagogues of all the centuries of Israel's History. It is the living witness to Israel's spiritual purpose and Israel's spiritual power. A thousand years stood the glorious Temples of Israel, the Temples of Solomon and Ezra and Nehemiah and Herod; and two-thousand years our humble synagogues have stood everywhere throughout the world. Every new Temple in Israel is the symbol of the perpetual altar whose perpetual fire has never ceased to burn. Physically, the Jew has been overwhelmed; spiritually,



the Jew is triumphant; it is his only triumph, - any other victory were defeat and disaster.

This is the monumental epoch of Temple building. The stone of our Temples monument the survival and the strength of Israel. Important is not the dead stone but the living spirit; valueless the dead trunk, giant survivor of the king of the forest, if there be no life within it. Magnificent are the sanctuaries of Israel, too often mausoleums for the dead, not Temples open to life and the living. Our Temples are splendid physically and splendid their opportunities and possibilities. Our congregations hold latent wonderful power in their hundreds of men and women and children. The mighty engine needs steam to drive the giant wheels; our congregations need the spirit power, the soul of men and women and children to be the soul power of the Temple.

Congregations and Temples glory in their successes. They measure it by growth, by number of membership and hosts of children, by financial strength and freedom from debt. A congregation is not a real success, does not do its appointed work until the Temple helps to make our lives, our families, our homes - a success; until out of the Temple there comes spiritual uplift and moral power, religious lives and religious character. That congregation is a success which creates homes with a spiritual atmosphere and nobler ideals; which trains a race of men to a manhood more rugged, and a race of women to a womanhood finer and nobler; which gives to sons and daughters higher hopes and purer purposes for life's obligations and ambitions, and brings to fathers and mothers moral cheer and moral courage and makes them stronger and happier through all the difficulties and burdens of life.

The Temple is witness before all the world of the Jew's loyalty to Judaism. It proclaims what the Jew has done in history, what contribution he has made to the civilization of the world.

Judaism is four thousand years old - Judaism is four-thousand years young - four thousand years old but its heart is not congealed. It responds to every environment, it assimilates every civilization, it accepts every new truth. Judaism is old

in history and tradition, in forms and ceremonies; it seems enwrapped in a shroud of death; but stripped of its mummy wrappings, it is found not dead, nor dying, but living. Within the half century, within the memory of living men, Judaism has passed through a reformation and a transformation in this land, which would have been the death of a religion less sound and less vigorous of heart.

Judaism, the old mother of religions, in this twentieth century, is emphasizing anew the age-old Jewish teachings. It proclaims the unity of God and the unity of all life and of all history. It teaches that God rules, not a tribal and not a Palestinian God - not a God of the Hebrews - but one God of all the universe. God is Father and man is son of God, every man is son of God. It does not humanize Deity, it does not deify humanity. It proclaims man, created in the image of God - man under a divine appointment - a moral, responsible being. It emphasizes the dignity of man. The human race is not lost and nations are not doomed. Judaism has no faith in a fallen humanity, but in rising human kind.

Four thousand years young, in every age influenced by and influencing life and thought. It taught the civilized world to interpret life and history ethically. It taught mankind that the conduct of individuals and the conduct of nations are to be weighed in the scales of justice. The ethical ideals and the ethical hopes which are the ideals and the hopes of intelligent men and women in our age, came not out of Egypt or Babylon, or cultured Greece or conquering Rome; they came out of the fundamental moral laws, taught in ancient Judea. The world's passion for purity and holiness, mankind's thirst for God and hunger for righteousness are born of Israel.

The Jew today is the living representative of one-hundred generations of Israel. Four thousand years old, he is four thousand years young. He lives not because of might or of number. The old biblical prophecies that Israel should be as the sand of the sea and the stars of heaven have never found fulfillment. Israel's power is spiritual and not physical. The strength of Israel was the strength not of the force of arms, but the all-conquering power of the spirit and of the soul. There have



been many peoples mightier than Israel and nations more numerous - they have aged, they have declined, they have passed away.

The Jew was, when Egypt built her magnificent temples and tombs and pyramids; the Jew was, when Babylon reared her wonderful palaces and walls and her beautiful hanging gardens; the Jew was, when Rome was founded upon her seven hills; the Jew was when out of Greece a young Alexander went forth to conquer the world. There were giants in those days, these are the great names of the great people of antiquity and of all history. And the great nations of Europe, of mediaeval and of modern times - England and France, Spain and Portugal, Germany and Italy and Russia, persecuted, tortured, expelled and slaughtered their unfortunate Jews.

The great nations of antiquity are only memories now and Israel lives, and lives with power. The pyramids stand as sentinels fronting the sands of the desert; the beautiful hanging gardens and palaces have been long since buried beneath Babylonian ruins; the Parthenon crowns the Acropolis, symbol of vanished glory; the Forum stands in the old empire city, and nearby the arch of Titus, erected to commemorate the Roman triumph over old Jerusalem. On the arch of Titus is pictured in stone the seven-branched candlestick, symbol of the spoils of the Temple carried in triumph through the streets of conquering Rome. Forum and arch of Titus speak of Roman power and Roman pride and Roman splendor that are no more. Jerusalem, too, is fallen and has been rebuilt - but the Temple of the God of Israel stands not on the hill of Zion. The Jew lives! alone of all the peoples of antiquity - child of the ancient world race, unquestionably the most wonderful race in human history. Forty centuries old, in the midst of all the people of earth, forty centuries old in history and law and custom; forty centuries young - young with power, with enthusiasm, with idealism and devotion to God.

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