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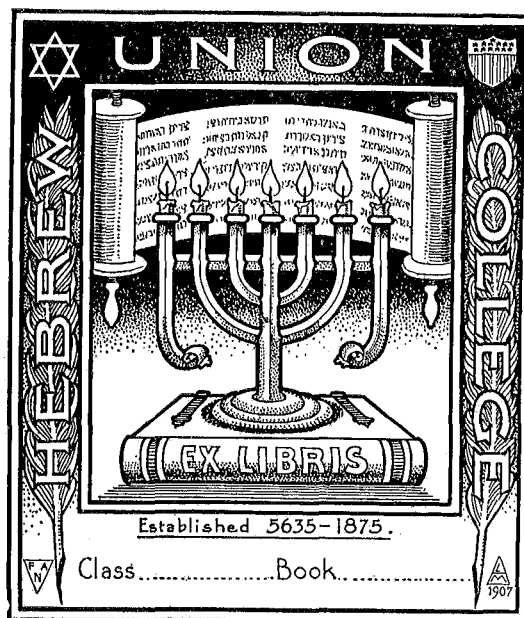
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SERMON

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ON

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BY THE

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MY DEAR BRETHREN,

My ministrations in your midst approach their close, and I stand before you to-day with the last words of instruction which it will be my privilege to address you from this place. On similar occasions it is customary for the preacher to review his past labours and their success, to present the history of all the cares and joys of his official life, which is closing with his very words. This I purpose not to do. The occasion is for me too solemnly important to be occupied with individual felicitations or individual regrets. To the future, rather, I will look—to the future that is before you; and I will spend my last official effort in indicating to you the course of communal prosperity as taught by Holy Writ and illustrated by holy sages.

אמת ומשפט שלום שפטו בשעריכם :

“Truth and the judgment of peace execute you in your gates.” (Zach. viii. 16.)

Upon these words the sages of the Talmud give us two comments in Aboth, רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר על שלשה דברים העולם קים על האמת ועל הדין ועל השלום :

Simon, son of Gamliel, says “The world is established on three things: on Truth, on Justice, and on Peace.”

שמעון הצדק אומר על שלשה דברים העולם עומד על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים :

Simon the Just says, “The world stands upon three things: upon the Law, upon the Worship, and upon Beneficence.”

By the text and its two glosses we have thus presented to us three essential spheres of Congregational activity

and three essential means of Congregational prosperity. These are—

1. Truth taught by the Law.
2. Justice observed in the Worship.
3. Peace prevailing in the Charities.

I.

Brethren, how does the Law teach truth? It teaches by the enlightening influence of its spirit. Whenever we read God's word, and ponder on its lessons, we learn truth. We cannot approach the fountain of truth to drink without being refreshed and re-invigorated, unless, indeed, our eyes are so dim that the stream of living waters, while before us, remains unrecognised. Error thus frequently clouds our vision, so that the grandest opportunities are pretermitted and the highest advantages neglected until it be too late. Happily, however, the Law has its ministers, through whose agency our visual dimness is dispelled, and error driven to flight before the approach of truth. These ministers are the School and the Pulpit. The one is the sphere of the boy's, the other is the sphere of the man's, instruction. They are both equally indispensable in the work of religious culture, though, unhappily, their fruit is not always yielded in measure. The School is the place where all the crudities of the childish nature are smoothed down and fashioned into slightly form—where a host of native impulses, native passions, and native imperfections have to be regulated and made amenable to the influence of religion—where ignorance and its vices have to be eradicated, and to be replaced by knowledge and its blessings.

But in order that the School shall effect these legitimate results, truth must regulate your conduct in relation to it. You are not to neglect your institutions and then complain of the consequences of that neglect, but you must work for the School and in the School, and see that it is faithful to its purpose—the development of truth. Assure yourselves that your teachers are אנשי דיל men of integrity,

"ד' fearers of God, אנשי אמת men of truth. See that they know how to teach and what to teach—that they are not wholly engrossed with the minds of their charges, but that they have regard also to the culture of their souls—those souls that are so precious in the sight of God. Let this be your care, brethren, whether you be directors, parents, or simply Israelites, for with you rests the alternative of rendering your Schools places of grand achievements or of signal failures—of making the rising generation grasp truth or reject it. Seize the conviction that to you are confided the gravest responsibilities, responsibilities which involve the hopes and the destinies of generations yet unborn.

The second minister of the Law is the Pulpit, an agent not much valued by our congregation, but it is one that is destined to exercise the most unbounded influence over the religious spirit of the age. The Pulpit is only a school, which has men and women for its pupils—pupils the most intractable because they are the most perverse and self-sufficient. Many of you say that the Pulpit is a luxury and can be dispensed with. This opinion might have been justified in olden days, when from it you heard rude parables, fanciful conceits, crude hypotheses. These operations of learned minds may amuse and entertain, but they do not present you with the truth. Such lucubrations really degrade the Pulpit from its exalted object, which is to lead men to God, through truth. The Pulpit must teach true religion—religion as comprehending piety, virtue, morality. The Pulpit must warn and exhort; must stir the soul and move the passions. It must rouse the slumbering sinner from his lethargy by the vehemence of its call, and it must support the broken-hearted penitent by the gentleness of its comfort. It must recall the erring mind from its meditated defection by a word in season, and by its inspiration of hope and faith must confirm the doubting. These, brethren, are the legitimate influences of the Pulpit, and he who depreciates them only does so because he fears. The child of iniquity likes not to hear his vices denounced. The hypocrite cannot endure the un-

veiling of his guile. The man of external religion writhes when his mechanical piety is arraigned. Therefore all these unite to condemn the Pulpit as useless.

But, brethren, let me pray you never be without a monitor in this sphere. The Pulpit is the watchtower of your city, and its occupant is the sentinel whom God appoints to guard its safety *והוא נזהר ומלט את נפשו*. Be heedful of him and your soul will be delivered: *ולא נזהר דמו בו יתיה*: neglect his warning and your blood be upon you. But in order that the Pulpit be thus operative for good, truth must also abide in it. Seek if you will greater learning, loftier eloquence, deeper fervour, but for all these do not sacrifice truth. Sincerity of purpose, consistency of conduct, and fidelity to the lessons he enunciates are indispensable requirements for the teacher of truth. Demand them, therefore, and obtain them, but when you have secured them value them and respect them. The Pulpit can never avail you if you do not revere its occupant. Never degrade your minister by saying, or even thinking, that he is your servant. No. He is God's servant only. From on high is his commission, from the great Creator whose providence appoints him to preside over you in order to promote your happiness here and hereafter by means of the truth as taught by the Law.

II.

The second element of congregational prosperity is justice observed in the worship. In olden times, when sweet savours mounted up to heaven from our altars, the *עבודה*, or ritual worship, consisted of sacrifices. Now our Temple desolated, sacrifices have ceased, and are superseded by the prayers and praises which we utter, whereby *נשלמה פרים שפתינו* we replace with our lips the sacrificial bulls. It is in this representative service that we have to observe justice—justice to God and justice to man. We have to preserve the character of the ancient sacrifices in the worship which replaces them. Those sacrifices

were ordered to be of our best, perfect without blemish; so too our worship must consist of the best emotions of our soul, must be pure and unblemished in their source and in their expression. If, therefore, instead of the sacrifice which required the accompaniment of heart and spirit, we approach God with prayers that are wholly without heart and without spirit, we clearly fail in justice to God and insult His Majesty by what Scripture designates *זבח חכסילים*, offering the sacrifice of fools. Then, as the text tells us that society is based upon justice and upon the worship of God, let both go together, and your collective prosperity will be promoted; neglect them and your communal safety is imperilled. Like the salt of the sacrifice, devotion is essential to secure the acceptance of your worship. Without it you cry aloud with all the vehemence you can command. You may smite your breasts and bow your forms in token of your compunction; you will never be heard, you will never be answered until you do justice to God by serving Him with a sacrifice of heart, all pure, perfect and unblemished. I have said that in this sphere you must also observe justice towards man. I am not to be understood as referring in any way to the past. I am dealing only with the future. I stand to-day like the pilot who is expiring at his post. He heeds not the dangers through which he has safely guided his bark, but with his last dying effort he points to the shoals and quicksand towards which he is advancing. Therefore, brethren, while I charge you to do justice to God, by rendering your worship acceptable to Him, I no less earnestly entreat you to do justice to man by respecting the opinions of all your congregation. You will ask, how is it possible to respect the opinions of all, if divergence should exist? The reply is simple. Be faithful to the ancient landmarks of our faith. There is a word rife in Israel. It is a good word, but it is oftentimes used for evil. It has a wide signification, but it finds a very narrow application. It is Reform, the parent of infidelity, the agent that has demoralised many congregations of our people throughout the

world. I am now taking my leave of you, and, knowing the spirit of the age to which I have just adverted, I am oppressed by doubts and fears as to the principles which may sway my successor. I am deeply apprehensive of future influences and their baneful results. Therefore my last words to you urge justice upon you as a duty, and charge you to be faithful to orthodox worship. I seek not to attach you to details of form, or chant, or manner; but I do seek to bind you to principles. There are latent beauties in Orthodoxy capable of development that would sanctify our worship. Our faith has not withstood centuries of hate and persecution from without to require Gentile adaptations in order to render it operative among us. Therefore, I urge, cling to Orthodoxy. Improve your worship in every way; endow it with decorum, devotion, solemnity; but permit no encroachment upon its sanctity. Watch with a jealous eye every proposed innovation, and weigh calmly and deliberately its probable results. But be content to serve your God with the worship your forefathers used. So shall the bond which links you with your brethren throughout the world be still preserved, and the lesson be spread abroad which the text inculcates, that society is based primarily upon the worship of the Creator, heightened and confirmed by justice to God and man.

III.

The last constituent of congregational prosperity is peace, and its sphere is *גמילות חסדים*, your charities—the varied institutions by which you minister to distress and want. Truly, brethren, may it be said of you that you are *רחמנים בני רחמנים*, compassionate children of compassionate fathers. There is no possible shape which human misery can assume, but you find the means to relieve it. Let then my valedictory words bear faithful testimony to the truth that you have been constant, earnest and active in maintaining the Jewish character for charity. Are poor, untutored infants thrust forth into the world

without the instruction which alone can fit them for the battle of life? Behold your *גמילות חסד* provides for them. Your Schools extend their doors to receive and welcome them, and by careful training to qualify them for society. Are desolate outcasts roaming abroad exposed to inclement winds without the necessary covering to keep life in their veins, warmth in their bosoms? Your *גמילות חסד* clothes their nakedness and makes their hearts glow again with comfort. Is the hand of the Lord heavy upon some suffering brother, who, pressing the couch of mortal sickness, sees his young ones famishing for food which he cannot earn for them? Your *גמילות חסד* descends unto his hearth to feed the hungry and to banish want and misery. Is some friendless youth anxious to seek a living in a strange land, there to win the success which he has sought at home in vain? Again, your *גמילות חסד* comes to his assistance, encourages him on the path of labour, and helps him to eat in joy, and honour the bread of independence. Your *גמילות חסד* provides an orphanage for the fatherless—an asylum for the aged—an almshouse for the decayed—and a hospital for the sick. Aye, and when the winter blasts are raging abroad, and frost and snow are revelling in the bitter night, many a poor brother draws nigh to a blazing fire to finish his daily task—many a poor sister enwraps her babes in the garments of genial warmth and comfort, and as they do so invoke a blessing upon you for your beneficence which gives them such enjoyments. All these bounties your institutions dispense, and have dispensed for nearly two hundred years in faithfulness and lovingkindness.

My last word to you is, cherish these institutions, extend their usefulness, and enlarge the sphere of their operations. Make them prosperous. Do you ask how you can assure their prosperity? The text tells you, only by peace. United, you have been able to do all the good I have described; divided, your glory will be dimmed, your usefulness impaired, and your poor will suffer. Thus their interests and yours both demand that you exert every

effort to secure unanimity of action among yourselves. To that end be mutually considerate, mutually conciliatory, mutually conceding. So shall you all labour for the promotion of a single aim—the prosperity of your congregation. It is an aim that can never be so certainly assured or so firmly maintained, as when your edifice has for its pillars, Truth and Justice, and for its foundation, Heavenly Peace.

And now, brethren, nothing remains for me but to bid you an affectionate farewell. I have spoken to you in all love and frankness, because from now that I address you, we may never more meet again upon earth. My solicitude, however, will always be for your welfare and happiness. The only reference I shall make to the past is to remember that during the years of my ministration, Duty may have placed me hostile to some of you. Let such differences be forgotten and forgiven now, and let us part mutual friends and well-wishers. Are there any who have wronged me covertly or openly, in word, or thought, or deed? Cordially I forgive the injury, and invoke additionally the pardon of God for them. So, too, if on my part, I have ever wronged any, at this hour and in this place I offer the earnest reparation of deep regret for the past—peace for the future. Let mutual forgiveness seal our separation, and even as I shall ever remember only your goodness to me, so let my memory be preserved among you only for good.

Let all my private failings and official shortcomings be blotted out from your record by the recollection of the zeal and faithfulness with which I have done my duty to God and to you in truth, in justice, and in peace. Farewell, my beloved friends, and may the Eternal have you always in His keeping.

Adonai bless and preserve you.

Adonai make His countenance shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

Adonai lift up His countenance unto you and give you peace.

AMEN.