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"Studies in the Development of
Conservative and Reform Judaism in the United States."

"A Comparison of the Views of
Isaac Leeser and Isaac Mayer Wise with Respect to the
Messiah and Mission of Israel."

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microfilmed 10/5/66

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Studies in the Development of Conservative and Reform Judaism in the United States: A Comparison of the Views of Isaac Leeser and Isaac Mayer Wise with Respect to the Messiah and Mission of Israel.

Few doctrines lend themselves better to a study of the development of Conservative and Reform Judaism in the United States than a comparison of the respective views with regard to the Messiah and Mission of Israel. Isaac Leeser, nineteenth century exponent of orthodoxy in America, looked forward to the redemption of his people and the salvation of mankind through a Messiah. Isaac Mayer Wise, nineteenth century leader of reform, could not reconcile the Messianic concept to a democratic world. He believed in the Mission of all Israel, wherein Israel as a people would continue to preach and seek a better world through divine truth.

Isaac Leeser regarded the Messianic belief to be a "matter of credence," "ordained as the will of God." Both Scripture and prayer book testify to his coming. Isaac Mayer Wise, on the other hand, asserted that a political view of one age is not an article of faith for another. It is inconceivable, he declares, how one can believe that the Mission of Israel is the function of one man.

Both Wise and Leeser emphasized the value of ceremonies in Jewish life. But while expressing agreement with the

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doctrine that Israel has a destiny as a people, Isaac Leeser bitterly attacked reformers who would strip Judaism of its forms in order to convert the world. Rather, he declared, let the nations adopt the forms of Judaism. Whereas Wise believed that when the nations would accept divine truth as preached through Judaism, the Jewish people could dispense with its distinctive religious forms, Leeser termed this a heresy. A Mission of Israel must recognize the distinctiveness of Judaism in contradistinction to the pagan world.

Isaac Leeser took the Bible as his final authority in Judaism. Wise, though willing to argue on Scriptural grounds, recognized the spirit of the age as the determining factor in the adjustment of Judaism to the American scene. Therein lies the basic difference between these leaders in Judaism. Therein exists the basic difference in the orthodox and reform approach to the Messiah and Mission of Israel.

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P r e f a c e.

In undertaking "Studies in the Development of Conservative and Reform Judaism in the United States", our first task was to confine this subject to a manageable scope. It was therefore decided to select exponents of the various philosophies of Judaism, present their views, and indicate wherein they agreed and wherein they disagreed. This writer chose, after a survey of the field, to compare the views of those arch foes of 19th century American Judaism, Isaac Leeser and Isaac Mayer Wise. Isaac Leeser, the chazan of an orthodox congregation in Philadelphia, is alternately referred to by historians as orthodox and conservative. The differences in the terminology were vague in this period, and we shall not discuss this question, except insofar as we treat the kind of reform Leeser favored for Jewish life. Both Leeser and Wise, who launched the battle of reform Judaism in America, interested themselves in every aspect of the American Jewish picture. We have therefore felt compelled to limit ourselves to one specific phase of their controversy - their views of the Messiah and Mission of Israel. All of the pertinent English writings of Leeser and Wise on this subject during the life time of the former have been read. We trust therefore that this study will be of benefit and interest to the reader not only insofar as it offers an insight into orthodox and reform views on the Messiah and Israel's Mission, but also to the extent that it sheds light upon Jewish adjustment to an enlightened environment and the

problem of establishing criteria of authority in American Jewish life.

The 19th century was an epoch pervaded by the spirit of revolution and freedom. The divine right of kings was constantly being challenged. The rights of the people to self-government were freely asserted. The Jewish immigrant to America found himself blessed with freedom of religion and freedom of speech. America was his home. He was a citizen and was entitled to all of the rights and privileges attached thereto.

It is no wonder then, amidst such an enlightened atmosphere following centuries of European oppression, that many of our people felt the need of a change in our doctrinal view of life. The Sanhedrin in France had already blazed the trail in pledging Jewish allegiance to the State and in rejecting the hope of a Messianic restoration to Palestine. Amidst the new birth of freedom it was considered by some not only senseless and sinful but actually dangerous for the Jew to mouth prayers for redemption from exile.

The struggle therefore developed between those who would eliminate the Messianic belief from Jewish doctrine and those who adhered to the traditional viewpoint. Both sides sought to establish sanction for their point of view. Their vigorous, stimulating broadsides marked the opening volleys in a battle which rages unto this day in American Jewish life. Perhaps a study of their bitter arguments may enable us to observe our picture with a more calm and objective eye. It is with this hope in mind that we present a "Comparison of the Theological Views of Isaac Leeser and Isaac Mayer Wise with respect to the Messiah and Mission of Israel."

The Views of Isaac Leeser.

Isaac Leeser was the banner nearer of Jewish conservatism in the nineteenth century. He lived in an America that was turning away from tradition, in a Jewish community which was torn between traditional ordinances and the lure of environmental license. Isaac Leeser's answer to the Jew, who wished to alter tradition in conformity with the New World, was that every Jew is required to adhere to the letter of the law. The Jew who does not conform to this formula is not only not orthodox, He is "unJewish". We shall see in the course of this study that his belief was not altogether irrational. He did not possess a blind faith in Scriptures. He too, from the Conservative point of view, endeavored to adjust Judaism to nineteenth century America. To do so, he was quite willing to draw upon the forces of reason and of science. But in the last analysis, Scripture was his authority. The following study of Isaac Leeser's Messiah concept - but one phase of the Conservative-Reform conflict - will enable us to document Leeser's convictions as expressed in his literary effort.

Chapter One: Nature of the Messiah.

Isaac Leaser's Messiah is quite vividly pictured in his Discourses. This is the only source where he depicts the Messiah in such vivid terms. More often than he treats the nature of the Messiah, we have found him to attack the Anti-Messianists. This is quite natural and understandable. Most Jews knew what the Messiah "was," and what He meant in Jewish life. During the centuries of persecution their fathers had prayed desperately for the scion of David. But now in an "enlightened" world and in an even more enlightened America the question was being raised repeatedly as to the necessity and wisdom of a Messiah. It is therefore understandable that Isaac Leaser wrote much more prolificly in attacking the new "heresy" than in positively stating the nature of the Messiah, whose function was almost self-understood in Jewish life.

According to Isaac Leaser, the chief personal characteristic of the Messiah is his lineal descent from David, the son of Jesse of Bethlehem. While the Bible refers to the Messiah as David, prince or king, he is never referred to as god or son of god. The man Messiah, Leaser indicates, with Scriptural analysis, must be eminent in all the virtues which adorn man. His mental ability will correspond with his high office. One of the Biblical passages which ascribes unto him such a character is the extract from the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, wherein we learn that upon the Messiah shall rest the "spirit of the Lord...of wisdom and understanding...of counsel and of might...of knowledge and of fear of the Lord." The Redeemer will not be an ordinary man, not merely as wise as others are, but particularly fitted for the requirements of his glorious mission. He is to have three characteristics :

1). Extensive knowledge. Whatever any one knows or can acquire shall be familiar to him.

2). The spirit of prophecy or knowledge of hidden things.

3). He shall be eminently wise and a dispenser of justice. Evil doers will find in him an unflinching judge, and he will fear neither the great, nor be terrified by the mighty.

"Such a one has not as yet been seen on earth," declares Leeser,³
"and consequently we yet expect his coming".

Taunted by his opponents with expecting a mere temporary king,⁴ a warrior and a conqueror, the exponent of Conservatism replies, "we expect in the Messiah a two fold character, - the one is purely spiritual, as has been shown already...but the other characteristic is certainly temporary, and no one...can be the Messiah, who does not unite both in his own person. - From Ezekiel especially, and also Obadiah and Zachariah, it appears that great wars will be waged in Palestine at the time of the end; and farther than this will be a period of great tribulation to Israel." Our people will, by the aid of God, escape from the threatened extirpation. This aid of God will be rendered through an agent, who is the Messiah. He will be a warrior. Such a characteristic does not detract from his high dignity, but offers further proof of the goodness of God, in protecting his people from destruction.

After presenting these two characteristics of the Messiah, Isaac Leeser reminds his readers that the prophet also depicts the Messiah as "lowly and riding on an ass." For he will be humble and teach humility and love of God. And then, after the wars are over, peace shall reign and man shall dispense with their weapons. "So that the temporal actions of our future hope shall redound as much to the

benefit of mankind as his spiritual gifts will be: for those will pave the way for peace and happiness, -- these will establish the same on a foundation which shall never be moved!" Isaac Leeser's Messiah is thus an exceptionally gifted personality, who will not only benefit Israel, but bring peace on earth through his temporal achievements. Leeser expresses the hope that these opinions regarding the Messiah will prove to be "altogether founded on the word of God, and are conformable to the dictates of reason." For in dispatching the Messiah God "works through natural means and natural agents, and consequently these will always be resorted to in some measure, even at the performing of great miracles."

Leeser's view of the nature of the Messiah must not be considered to be the theoretical property of one man's whims. Leeser, as the representative of the orthodox point of view, established his premises through Scriptural interpretation. He was thus justified in formulating them into a catechism. And this he did. His catechism reiterates in simple terms his beliefs. We read, for example:

- "5). Through whose agency will the Divine reign on earth be established?

Through the Messiah, or the anointed of God, who is to descend from the family of David; it is therefore also called the reign of or kingdom of the Messiah. (Isaiah 11:1-10).

- 6). What do you understand by "the king Messiah"?

The Messiah is to be a person, a human being, sent by God to do those acts which he purposes should be done on earth at the time of the redemption...his government is to be terrible only to the wicked, but peaceful and benevolent to the just, no matter how poor or humble they may be."

The Messiah and God's law:

"The Messiah is to be entirely the servant of the Lord, under the law, just as every other Israelite; he is to do nothing which the others are not permitted to do; and his duties will be pointed out and strictly defined. As such therefore he is himself accountable, and can accordingly have no power to be a mediator between God and man, farther than Moses and the other prophets and pious men of our people were" (Ezekiel 37:24).

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During reign of Messiah:

"The only pure faith, the law promulgated by God, will spread itself in its utmost purity, free from all admixture which, in process of time, may have been mixed up with its precepts, over all the earth, and be the only governing principle of all hearts: all men will then acknowledge the Only One, the everlasting God as the sole subject of their worship, and love each other as friends and brothers." (Joel 3:1-2). This point that the law will be spread "free from all admixture" was to be perverted by the extreme reformers who believed that the kingdom of God was already at hand.

Messiah and Israel:

"He will be the means of the making of a new covenant between the Lord and Israel, and through his agency the conversion of the whole people to righteousness will be effected, in consequence of which the Lord will forgive their sins, and be no more angry with them for their former misconduct." (Isaiah 54:7,8).

Other consequences to Israel:

"The people of Israel, now scattered over all the earth, are to be assembled again into one state in the land of Palestine, where

they are to be governed by the king Messiah, under the rule of the divine law... The divisions and the quarrels of the different sections of the country are to cease forever; and the outcasts even of the nation, they who have lost the name of Israel, no matter where scattered, shall be brought back from the most distant countries to the land of Canaan, which shall then be free from the plague of ferocious beasts and noxious reptiles, and be blessed with fruitfulness and plenty, and no one shall make afraid or disturb the people, who have so often been the object of scorn and contempt to their enemies: for these too will acknowledge that the children of Israel are indeed the beloved of the Lord".

(Det. 30:1-5).

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Religion of the Bible: The universal Religion:

"To judge from probability alone... the law made known at Sinai would be the law of all the world at the time of the divine rule on earth. For in the Lord there is no change of purpose, no want of firmness; and what he therefore declares to be right at one time must be so always. But Scripture actually declares that our religion, at least a part thereof, shall be the sole law and religion of all men; and it is this chiefly which will make the time of the Messiah the period of universal blessing and peace."

(Isaiah 2:3,4).

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The Time of the Messiah:

"The prophets speak of the time as surely coming, but have not given us sufficient means to fix the precise period; the day is known to the Lord alone; but it is in our power to hasten its coming, through virtue and the fear of the Lord. But even if we should persevere in our wickedness and be undeserving: still God will bring about the fulfilment of his word at the time

beyond which the redemption of the world is not to be delayed."
(Isaiah 56:1,2).

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Advent of the Messiah: How are we to recognize when he does arrive?

"Whenever all the signs given by the prophets take place, and all the predictions are accomplished, then, and only then, has the Messiah actually come; and the person who is gifted with the spirit of God as laid down by Isaiah will be known as the true anointed... But the time of the Messiah will also be distinguished by the previous coming of Elijah the prophet, who will prepare the way for the renovation of mankind." (Malachi 3:1) (Malachi 23:24).

Thus we may conclude that Isaac Leeser believed in a man Messiah, in contradistinction to the Christian view, a Messiah who would bring peace on earth, through war if necessary, a Messiah who would restore Israel to Palestine where he would govern as king. Through him, at least a part of our religion would become the universal religion. (This moderate statement is an unintentioned invitation to reform, for it leaves the question open as to which are the eternal and which the temporary precepts.) Righteousness would speed the coming of the Messiah, but, even if Israel is wicked, the Messiah is destined to come by a certain time. And so, among his Thirteen Principles of Faith, Isaac Leeser reasserts: "I believe with a firm faith in the coming of the Messiah; and though he tarry, still will I daily wait for his coming."

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Chapter Two:

The Messiah and the Law.

Extremely important to the discussion of the Messiah is the emphasis to be placed on Scriptural authority. Isaac Leeser was not opposed to Reform as such. He did not believe that reforms should be introduced by "people under suspicion", nor to keep "doubtful converts" and thereby lose many others. Reforms, to be useful and permanent, must be first lawful, universally so acknowledged; secondly, they must be gradual; and third, they must be admitted only by general consent. If they fail of either of these requisites, they produce contests, schisms, and alienation of feelings. "To introduce reforms, therefore, merely to satisfy the clamour of some malcontents, is the worst possible policy; and this idea, policy, is unfortunately one which many understand better than principle."¹⁴

¹⁵
Leeser maintained that "no reform can ever be successful which does not proceed from within." Reform, he contended, must proceed out of the center of Judaism, based upon the law and tradition; and whatever militates against these is error. When will such reform take place? The exponent of Conservatism replies:¹⁶
"it is gradually taking place now; it is the silent working of reason acting in concert with religion; many unsightly though innocent customs have already disappeared, and all that can be dispensed with will be left unobserved as fast as this may be safe and practicable."

A legitimate question at this point is: What may be dispensed with? What reforms are acceptable, safe and practicable? Leeser endorsed the reforms of Rabbi Adler, chief rabbi of Great Britain,

to increase the decorum in the Synagogue. Dr. Adler had abridged the time of the duration of the service, not by cutting down the prayers themselves, but by abolishing the sale of the Mitzvot and the limitation of the Misheberach to a single person, except on special occasions. Leeser declared, "Dr. Adler has based his reforms upon admitted legal principles of Jewish polity and ancient custom; he has endeavored to carry back the Synagogue to its simplicity, and thereby taken an energetic step to stop the mania for mere change, which has taken such deep root in many communities."

Adler's reforms were therefore acceptable because they conformed with custom and legal principle.

Leeser later writes:¹⁸ "If our Reformers would take their stand on Scriptures, look into the Talmud for authority, and then endeavor to decide the question of the day according to Scripture and tradition: there can be no doubt but that absurdities and trifles which have crept in during the course of ages imperceptibly into our practice, and were perhaps unconsciously borrowed from the various systems which have borne rule over us, could be easily laid aside without exciting opposition from any quarter, except perhaps from the unthinking to whom everything is sacred which is the product of by-gone ages, though it may have been an innovation only a few centuries ago, and this introduced against the advice of men of undoubted learning and piety."

But reform, we are reminded, has its limits. Judaism is not a creature of circumstance; it is a positive fact, a revelation. We have ancestral customs which are inseparably connected with our duties. These too must stand. Thus it is possible to determine at once, though we are for progress, what reforms we will always

be opposed to."

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Leeser says unhesitatingly, " the whole of the Hamburg temple, its music, its banishing the reading of the law during the cycle of twelve months, its German hymns, its preaching of an ideal Messiah, its opposition to the bodily coming of the son of David, its viewing Germany as our Fatherland in a permanent sense, its repudiation of the gathering of the captives...are rank heresies, which we, in common with millions of Israel, condemn as inimical to the religion of Israel."

Among his list of heresies Isaac Leeser includes non-belief in a Davidic Messiah. In volume eighteen of the Occident he re-affirms the relationship between Messianism and divine legisla-
20
tion. As he says: "the Messianic doctrine is one intimately connected with the belief in the supremacy of the divine legisla-
tion, its rejection identical with a desire for the extinction of Israel, and the cessation of the Bible laws as the chief arbiter of human rights." The implication of this statement is clear: the Messianic belief is sanctioned and ordained by Sacred Scripture. By rejecting this belief, one renounces respect for scriptural authority.

This point is emphasized in an editorial "Jewish Creed", where Leeser declares that faith in Scripture demands adherence to the
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Messianic belief. One may not doubt the Messiah if he believes in the Bible. "The God who revealed Himself to man...also made known through his accredited messengers these his intentions; and consequently they have become a matter concerning which no one can consistently entertain any doubt who truly believes in the truth of the Biblical records." It will not do, we are informed

to assert that because the Jewish religion might be true without the coming of the Messiah, we will not believe in his coming; for since the promise has been made, it has become an integral portion of the things concerning which we have been instructed, and as such it has become a matter of credence...just as the Sabbath and other commandments ...from no other reason than that they have been ordained as the will of God." To presume even to cast a shadow of a doubt upon the hope of Israel in the ultimate fulfillment of all the good the Lord has promised unto His people through means of the son of David, simply because this mission is not an event absolutely necessary to the existence of the divine law," is a refusal to be taught by the Lord, the only source of all wisdom and truth.²¹

Isaac Leaser's assumption that rejection of the Messiah is a concurrent rejection of Sacred Scripture must be predicated on the assumption that there is adequate Scriptural proof for the advent of the Messiah. Some of this proof has already been cited. Additional proof of a minute textual character may be found in Leaser's Discourses.²²

Let us now, however, turn to various other Scriptural and traditional proofs offered by Leaser with regard to the Messiah.

Chapter Three:

Scriptural and Traditional Proof for the Messiah.

In September, 1850, Isaac Leeser formulated his views on "Judaism and Its Principles" in an editorial article in the Oc-
²³cident. One of the stated purposes of this article was to illustrate the idea of the Messiah on Scriptural grounds. Leeser
²⁴said: "We mean to take our stand on Scriptural grounds solely, in which mode of arguing neither philosophical knowledge nor a deep acquaintance with antiquarian lore is required." Leeser failed to abide faithfully by this promise, but there is nevertheless an attempt made throughout his writings to base his views, if not on Scripture itself, at least on the prayer book. Leeser, for
²⁵example, asserts: "Both history and the Scriptures support our belief in a Messiah." He then proceeds to illustrate: the prayers "Val ken nekaveh", "hakol yoduchoh" and the formula "Es Zemach David". These prayers, he writes, maintain three ideas:

- 1). that there must come a change over the spirit of the world, so that all will acknowledge God as their sovereign;
- 2). that this will be done through a special messenger whom we call, for distinction's sake, the Messiah;
- 3). that this same anointed one shall be scion of David's royal line, a descendant of the king of Israel, who had been chosen to feed the flock of the Lord, and whose kingdom was never to cease while the laws of day and night should endure.

These were the prayers and hopes of the children of Israel for 2,000 years. Let the Anti-Messianists, challenges Leeser, try to deny that the Jewish people for 2,000 years did so interpret the Scriptures, so as to evoke therefrom the expectation of

a personal redeemer, a descendant of David, under whose sway the entire earth was to be brought to a knowledge of Truth, while Israel, as a people, was to be especially benefitted. The masses of the people were not satisfied with Jesus as a Messiah. Rather than accept Jesus, our ancestors suffered. And still they continued to pray throughout the centuries for the conversion of the world, the coming of the redeemer, and the appearance of the son of David, to grant them liberty, and open to mankind the portals of everlasting truth. This belief in the Messiah, contrary to what our opponents may say, did not lead the people to embrace Christianity in any of its phases, shapes or sects. Our ancestors were persecuted but they survived. "Our memory is not blotted out from the nations."

On April 5, 1860 a Milwaukee Jew, a member of Rabbi Isadore Kalisch's congregation, complained to the Occident that a convert was lost to Judaism when Kalisch told him that he did not believe in a personal Messiah. Leeser immediately took Kalisch to task and expressed surprise that one who believes "in the literal meaning of the Scriptures" could be a party to a prayer book (Minhag America) which rejects the hope of a Messiah. In a subsequent exchange of views, Leeser refuted Kalisch's charge that the doctrine of the Messiah ben David is not mentioned in the Pentateuch and prophets. He referred the Milwaukee rabbi to Deut. 30:3 and 41. This shows, he said, that the Pentateuch means to predict the future gathering together of Israel. That the Pentateuch teaches Kibbutz Galuyoth, and that Moses did not refer to America, England or Germany as the place of redemption, may be derived from Deut. 30:5. "And the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which

thy fathers possessed." This verse may be interpreted to mean Palestine, in accordance with the promise to the fathers of Israel in Genesis (Gen. 13:17).

To Kalisch's charge that the Pentateuch speaks of an event which may be accomplished with or without Ben David, Leeser answers that "the prophets speak of David by name." Ezekiel 34:24, for example, reads, "my servant ^{David} shall be a prince in their midst."

Rabbi Kalisch then terms as incorrect Leeser's statement that the "restoration of Israel to Palestine as a people, one and entire, is more clearly laid down than reward and punishment after death; for the latter is taught by inference and the former in direct terms." ²⁹ Leeser's evidence (Deut. 35:3-5), he asserts, does not actually mean that Israel will be restored one and entire. For Rabbi Akiba (Sanhedrin P. 110) believed that the ten tribes ³⁰ of Israel will never be restored to Palestine.

Leeser answers Kalisch's attack point by point. With regard to the restoration of the entire people of Israel to Palestine: Such a restoration is not so impossible as it would seem. For though many critics may be disturbed as to the whereabouts of the ten tribes, it is probable that "numerous members" of the ten tribes may return, since many of them "were incorporated with the kingdom of Judah, and were thus among those carried to ³¹ Babylon when Jerusalem was destroyed." (11. Chronicles 30: 5, ³¹ 11). Leeser therefore concludes that "under the most unfavorable circumstances, as now exist, the remnant of Judah and Israel can be restored to form a people one and entire; since the mass of Jews, now known as such, embraces men of all tribes,

and perhaps, for all any one can know, of every family...that ever descended from the loins of Jacob."

With regard to Rabbi Akiba's point of view, Leeser offers a two fold reply: not only did Akiba not mean in Sanhedrin that the ten tribes of Isreal would never be restored to Palestine, but four teachers, Rabbi Elazar, Simeon ben Judah, Rabbi Simeon³² and Rabbi Judah "controverted Rabbi Akiba's assumption." Rabbi Akiba did believe in the restoration, "though he erred in regarding the pseudo-Messiah, Bar Cochba, as the God chosen³³ instrument to effect this." He trusted in the maintenance of the identity of Israel through the part then contending for its independence, while Rabbi Elazar, for example, placed the fulfilment in the "distant, yet unrealized period".³⁴ Various Midrashim in Makoth confirm Akiba's faith in the temple restoration. Consequently, Leeser concludes,³⁵ "Akiba did believe in a third temple, with the son of David as God's messenger; and in his coming, too, all faithful Israelites believe, and do not acknowledge as Mr. Kalisch avers, that Zerubabel's rule represented the fulfilment of the prophecies." Instead of "sticking to Scripture, for from Scripture only he wished to prove the truth of the Messianic doctrine," Leeser says, Kalisch "runs off to Haggadoth³⁶ which only prove that certain men thought so and so." Kalisch's references, Leeser suggests, also have been wrongly stated. His Anti-Messianism may not be considered valid. His interpretations are erroneous, his authority not Scriptural. For both Prayer Book and Sacred Scripture, Leeser avers, support this thesis: Israel shall be restored to Palestine as a people through the intervention of the Messiah ben David.

Chapter Four:

Leeser: The Mission of Israel and the Spirit of the Age.

A. The Mission of Israel and Ceremonies.

It had been claimed by the extreme reformers that, in order to achieve the Mission of Israel, it would be necessary for Israel to purify itself, to be cleansed of the accumulation of centuries of ceremonial and practice. Only thus, it was asserted would the peoples of the world be intrigued by Judaism. Only in its pure state could Judaism appeal to them.

Isaac Leeser, who advocated both belief in a Messiah and a Mission of Israel, opposed this extreme point of view. Conscious of the destiny of Israel as God's witness and example to the nations, he declares, "the destiny of Israel has always been, and can never be any other, than to be witnesses of God's existence and power.... wherever the professing Israelite turns his steps, he carries with him the tokens of his being evidence, in the observance of the ceremonial precepts, no less than in the confession of his religious ideas." Leeser regarded the Mission's fulfilment as possible only if Israel were held together by ceremonial precepts. He argued: If the Israelite "values his hereditary mission, and is conscious of the value of the part assigned to him to act, he will not be ashamed to show himself in all his peculiarities before the goye of the world. It is his province to prove by his outward conduct that he maintains the same relative position to other nationalities which his fathers occupied. In other words, the various changes

of civilization, however they may have modified the manners and customs of other peoples, have of right no influence on the Jew; and he is precisely what he was, or rather he should be what his forefathers were, when the rest of mankind were either idolaters or savages." If witnesses were needed to prove to others the existence of the Almighty, it is not for us to say that this necessity is done away with by any event in ancient or modern times; for, in the first place, we are not certain that the whole family of man as yet acknowledge God alone, as the sole governing and saving Power; and, secondly, we had never yet heard the voice of Authority, which had said that we are no longer required to pursue our course separately and independently of other sons of Adam. Ceremonies will be necessary so long as God is not acknowledged. Israel, in her divine mission, must pursue a separate course.

And yet, "the men of modern progress have, under cover of proposing reforms in the externals of the Synagogue service, endeavored to strike a deadly blow against the creed of Israel, and this in two main points; ...the permanence of the obligatoriness of the precepts, and secondly to the idea of a personal Messiah; and the denial of both points is based upon the assumption which has been advanced...that the Israelitish nation themselves were to be the Messiah, or rather the Messianic people who were destined to reform the world, and introduce a sort of heavenly millenium on earth, where an improved Judaism, on the modern reform pattern, was to perfect a certain change, and bring the rest of mankind to an acknowledgment of the pure
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Unity."

There is no question in Leaser's mind that the "people

of Israel, as an entire mass, is destined to enact the most important part in the history of the world, which has yet been
 40 witnessed." He says this not because we conceive ourselves to be "much wiser and better than other portions of mankind, but only because the prophets have predicted it. The faction which now endeavors to obtain the mastery over the minds of Israelites, and calls itself the true expounders of Judaism, can, in his opinion, have no other reason for its belief in the glorious destiny of our people than the same prophets.

"Why," he asks, "did the Lord impart to us ordinances? The ordinances imparted... had another tendency besides imparting to us a good moral guide. On the contrary, to judge from the many distinctive precepts, and the ideals of the early fathers and teachers down to Moses and onward, "the uppermost principle in the whole legislation confided to our care, was to erect an insuperable barrier between Israel and all other nations, so that whatever might be the moral elevation which the latter were to attain, the former should have ceremonial
 41 marks by which they should at once be distinguishable." And so well was this principle recognized in the earlier ages, that Jacob and his sons declared it a disgrace to give a daughter of theirs in marriage to one who did not bear the impress of the covenant of Abraham. Ceremonial precepts were thus to serve as an instrument of separating Israel from other peoples.

In the early ages there was need to restrain, by a strict code of moral laws, our rebellious nature, and prevent us from becoming contaminated by the opinions and acts prevailing around us. Still what does this prove? Leeser's answer to his own

rhetorical question is blunt and revealing: "Not that Israelites should recede from their past, give up their practices, yield their opinions and hopes; but that if any change is to be produced, it is only to be obtained by a movement on the part of the unJewish world in the right direction of the law of Moses; to adopt therefrom all the necessary practices and to enable them to join leisurely the "kingdom of priests and the holy people", which the Israelites have been chosen to become.

This, says Leeser, "is a part of what we comprehend under the government of a personal Messiah, the conversion of all mankind to a law of the Universal God". This could never take place if we stripped ourselves gradually of our peculiar laws, and endeavored to resemble the gentile world. Instead we would find that those who cast off the distinctive garb of our faith would assimilate with the gentile and our Faith would lose the strength of their support.

The Editor of the Occident demonstrates through historical example that the reduction of external precepts may actually lead to assimilation and the weakening of our faith. "Where",
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he inquires, "are the enlightened men of Spain and Portugal? the philosophers of Germany? the politicians of England, France and America? even the singers, dancers, painters, actors, lawyers, mathematicians...who...thought it best to assimilate to the world? have they preserved for their families the distinctive faith in which they were born? No; even if they themselves remained nominal Jews, their families are not known among us; they are ... utter strangers to the belief in one God, and as inimical to our race and its hopes as the veriest enemy to Israel can well be under the present circumstances of the world.

In a word, it is impossible to maintain a Jewish faith without a practical demonstration thereof by outward acts; and therefore we should inculcate the necessity of observing the precepts, if we are true to our God and faithful to His Law".

Isaac Leeser distrusted reform in America because he feared that it intended to conform entirely with the spirit of the age. Reformers, he asserted, "have an idea that they will be able to effect a new conversion of mankind from Christianity, Mohamedanism, and the various Pagan superstitions, to such a form of the Jewish faith as they suppose to be in consonance with the spirit of the age. Hence, they imagine themselves called upon to strip it of all its repulsive features, so as to transform it into a religion of the world... eine Welt-religion. The idea is certainly a great one...only there is one thing which they lack, the needful reverence for the word of God to fit them for their apostolic work".

In another article on "Union of Israelites", Leeser reiterates his condemnation of reform. To maintain the word of God, he asserts, requires no pruning process of the moral reformers, and will not suffer their mutilating it to render it palatable to the outside world. We are not called upon to lessen the sum of observances to render them acceptable to those for whom they were not intended...If others join us, it does not lessen our duty; and if they do not, this does not augment our obligationas to the allegation that the spirit of the age is a sort of pope capable of binding and loosening, of prohibiting and permitting, we have not discovered any scriptural grounds for the assumption; it is the creature of some excited or fanciful brain, and deserves no more notice as a moral principle, than

would be the revenge of a maniac...."

In an article entitled "The Doctrine of the Messiah", Leaser continues his attack concerning the concept that teaches "the more mankind approached our standard of acknowledging the unity of God, the more might we freely lessen the number of duties, which would gradually lose their meaning, and therefore their obligatoriness....Men, according to this assumption, can be very good Jews without being practical Jews at all; in fact, they would show their piety to the greatest extent, the more they exhibited an outward course of conduct which gentiles would find no difficulty~~n~~ in adopting and following. In other words, it would be a duty to have but few observances, say Sabbath and perhaps circumcision, and reject prayer, fasting, the prohibitions as regards food, the onerous restrictions of a rabbinical Sabbath, Shopher, Tephilin, Lulab, Sukkah, and, in brief, whatever could show us to be a separate people..... we would require no research to learn the nice distinctions as to where the permitted thing commences and the prohibition ends;.... no Possekim, no Talmud, no Mishnah, and, for that matter, no part of the Bible," except for a few passages. This would be reducing religion to a simple base, without a creed, without duties. Another benefit would spring from it....the greatest ignoramus would be the best Jew....⁴⁶ This is being consistent, Leaser asserts. We reject theoretically what we had rejected practically. It will be claimed that we have misrepresented and exaggerated the views of the "man of Progress", But to what will their constant appeals to our convenience lead, if not to an abandonment of practical religion?... there is only

one legitimate result of such teaching, ' that with an increase of enlightenment and the closer the gentiles approach to the doctrine of the Unity, the less will the observance of the precepts become necessary.' It is alleged that Judaism is to convert the world; but just as by the apostles of old it is held that Judaism, with its Sabbaths, festivals, onerous restrictions and duties, is not fit to become the world-religion, wherefore its modification is a duty, so that it may be reduced to such a shape as to make it universally acceptable. Now.... in what manner is Judaism to remain what it always has been, if the duties it⁴⁷ required hitherto are struck away as useless and burdensome?" Though many a nominal Christian might be admitted to Judaism, who would have no hesitation coming to Synagogue if nothing distinctively Jewish were asked or needed, what, ⁴⁷Leeser demands, becomes of the Jews under such circumstances? could they retain their identity when they are no longer distinguishable from the other men who surround them?

Let us not be deluded into thinking, he warns, that uniformity of doctrine is possible in our day; "the world is as diverse in the opinion entertained of the Godhead as ever, and the rate of progression now pursued would.... require an indefinite number of generations to produce the least approach to a uniformity. What, then, is to become of the Jewish religion in the meanwhile, when you strip it of its externals?" ⁴⁸This question is answered with a quotation from Leviticus 20:26. God says: "And I have separated you from the nations that you should be mine." Now, then, can we remain God's own, if we are not separated,

so long as the others are not like us accepted and acknowledged as being in the same position towards the Creator? Externals are needed. Obsolete? No. Our religious customs, he remarks, are not obsolete. "We know not one which can be dispensed with....⁴⁸

... But what, in the meanwhile, it may be asked, is to become of the world? Leeser does "not in the least doubt, that the world will ultimately be reformed by and to Judaism, though not to all the observances ... incumbent on us."⁴⁹ But "reformed Judaism... can not be the means to effect the regeneration of mankind, since not a prophet has ever ~~thought~~ us that a naked belief in the highest truth is the chosen divine instrument.... We have no sympathy", he confesses, "with any efforts which are mainly calculated to influence others outside of our pale."⁵⁰ Is it likely or probable, at any rate, that this lessening process, this reducing of the whole Law - to win the gentile - to eleven, seven, three principles, or one, will induce others to join us? Experience, on the contrary, has shown, he says, that the Jews⁵¹ lapse into infidelity or apostasy by lessening their duties. In addition, it may be stated: Reform, can not show a greater proportion of converts than orthodoxy.

⁵² "Is it our business," asks the exponent of Coservatism, "to shape our religion to make it a favorite one for those who seek a profession of faith? Is Judaism in any wise calculated to become a popular system? And if it be possible to render it so, have we any Divine warrant to do it?....It is evident that the proceeding of the reducers of Judaism is unwarranted on the ground of common sense no less than ancient practice."

Isaac Leeson relates a story to illustrate his belief That Israel has been entrusted with a treasure that must not be squandered piecemeal. "We shall not relieve the mental distress of the world," concludes Isaac Leeson,⁵³ "by giving to one proselyte the Sabbath, to another the Passover, to another some third precept as the sole emblem of Judaism, and so dismember the religion, that we, the true descendants of the guardians of God's treasure, have nothing distinctive left by which we can be known among mankind. Nothing less than the whole line of Biblical duties will distinguish us; we must have prayer, Tephilin, Shophar, Lulab, Sabbath, Mitzvot, with Circumcision, and Day of Atonement to render our presence evident in the world; and if we give up these, we shall, in inducing mankind to adopt a part of our religion, leave them still in a state of spiritual destitution, and we would, at the same time, be nothing but heathen among them all.... When the time comes for the great final development of the divine scheme of the world's regeneration, the many will be summoned to guard with us the Divine gift, not to dismember it, but to hold it sacred for ever as the richest bestowal of God to his creatures! There can be no question, in the conservative leader's mind, that the main body of precepts is constituted as an everlasting obligation to be kept forever.⁵⁴ Those who accept Judaism must therefore accept these precepts. Judaism may not reduce itself to win their loyalty.

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In a final plea Isaac Leeson declares: "We want no American sect, no new reform, no new fangled doctrines indigenous to the soul; the banner of Judaism is broad enough to wave over all its

children, and its shield wide enough to protect all of them against the assaults of creeds differing from itself. If we have been able to struggle against the persecutions of eighteen centuries, with the belief in the coming of the son of David as the fixed hope of our life, we need not now hasten to throw it aside as a sacrifice to the advancing civilization of the age, in order to ward off the imaginary danger of our being gradually absorbed thereby into Christianity. This fear, though advanced with arguments against the possibility of a Messiah, is however nothing but a portion of the plan of introducing the new mongrel religion, whereby both Judaism and Christianity are to be forced out of existence. Leoser says, we have no time or means "to spare on the fancies of humanitarian reformers, who desire to embrace all mankind in their wide spreading schemes, while we have so much to do to consolidate our own affairs."

The exponent of Conservatism was thus opposed to any scheme which would involve the change of the precepts of Judaism in order to attain the conversion of mankind.

B. Isaac Leiser: The Messiah and Patriotism.

Isaac Leiser, with the same forcefulness with which he opposed any "Mission of Israel" which entails depriving Israel of her distinctive garb, defended the right of the Israelites to hope for a Messiah. Belief in a Messiah would not, he claimed, prejudice the patriotism of the Jewish people.

Leiser asserts that there is no conflict between
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looking forward to a Messiah and patriotism for four reasons:

- 1). The Messiah may not come for thousands of years. Meanwhile Israelites may continue to serve the countries wherein they dwell and contribute to their progress.
- 2). We are not responsible for our doctrines to any civil authority.
- 3). Experience proves that Jews who have believed in the Messiah have served their country well.
- 4). As history proves that no form of government is perfect, and as all is subject to change, the Jew can not be accused of a crime for thinking that in all probability no mere human ingenuity will ever succeed in perfecting a system in which injustice shall not lie heavily on some portion
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of the governed.

1. Day of the Messiah.

Some of our faint spirits allege that Israelites would be ungrateful if they wished to be considered otherwise than finally incorporated with the states in which they live, "wherefore they must yield the hope of a Messiah, not to mention the expectation of our being gathered from the various countries into Palestine, to form again an independent and sovereign state, governed by the Divine Law which we now possess!" 58

Where, Leeser challenges, is the evidence for ingratitude in this? Such an assumption would seem to presume that Jews who enjoy the rights of citizenship, for instance in France, cannot love France enough or be sufficiently grateful for the rights thus enjoyed, "if they believe that a time will come, sooner or later, but perhaps distant one or two thousand years or more or less, when it will please the Almighty to convoke 58 by means known to himself, and at a time known to himself only" all those who profess the Mosaic religion, and act according to its precepts. "Observe", Leeser reminds us, "Jews do not say that this restoration will take place this year, or in twenty years, or a hundred years hence, simply because they have no knowledge according to their belief of the period fixed for their return to their former state." For all, therefore, our sojourn "in all countries under the sun may endure longer than any now existing form of government will last, And still we look forward to the time when Israel shall again be a nation

among nations, as a matter which ^{will} take place!" 59

If it then depended on the Jew's idea of the restoration of the God-governed commonwealth, France, for instance, loses nothing of his services as long as she makes use of them in her present circumstances. Consequently she has no right to withhold any privileges from him which other citizen enjoy, because of his hope that "either in his life, if God so wills it, or after his death," the Jewish descendants shall be brought by acts directly emanating from the Creator, to be again what they were before France existed, a people one and undivided, "in a land to which they have the same right as the French have to France, and the English to England...." 60

Though it is possible that thousand of years may elapse before the son of David comes, Leiser admits: it may be this or the next year; no man knows. But up to the moment of the occurrence of this mighty event we are required by our religion "to seek the peace of the city where we sojourn." Preparation for the Messiah's advent will not interfere with our usefulness to our country. For preparation "should be only in the spirit, in virtue, in good deeds; in other respects, we should plant vineyards, plough fields, build houses, though we may be compelled to leave them to others. This does not concern us. We are directed to follow out the plan of Heaven, and whatsoever be the way this leads us to is right; and whatsoever we have been taught on the subject is true...." 61

2. Jewish Doctrine and the State.

The experience of the French Jew with Napoleon and the eagerness of the French Jewish Sanhedrin to placate the Emperor were fresh in Isaac Leeser's mind. He was conscious of the rapid change of French governments and the consequent alteration in the condition of the European Jew. While modern governments were mutable, Leeser looked upon Judaism as something eternally true and stable. One could not know today what the government would tomorrow decree. One could not know who would tomorrow be enthroned or dethroned. And so, Leeser could not sympathize with those who regarded service to the state as their highest duty, even paramount to their religion. On the contrary, he could "see nothing so fixed in anything, which human ingenuity can devise to believe in its permanency."

This point is borne out by history. When Napoleon came to the throne of France, the Jews thought that the Messiah had arrived. They vowed with other French citizens true and devoted attachment to his imperial Majesty, and they expressed fond hopes for the future prosperity of the infant king of Rome. "Of course," Leeser sarcastically writes, "our modern reformers needed no Messiah, when such a hero as Napoleon the First ruled over them, and they desired none for the time when the second of that name should assume the purple." But the great conqueror had to yield the sceptre to the restored Bourbons, and Louis XVIII. was hailed king of France. The king of Rome was sent to Vienna. But, of course, our people had a new Messiah in the restored Louis; and their parasitical praises of the dethroned Corsican had to

be transferred to a new claimant of their ardent love. Depicting the changing course of events, the ascension of Louis Philippe to the throne, Leoser declares, "no matter what were his measures of policy, for church or state, our reformers decreed no other Messiah than the king of the French. They had under the tri-color flag all that they desired, our Palestine had no charms for them, the commonwealth of Israel in Asia was a dream they did not wish for themselves, nor desired to see realized for others.

Then Louis' government fell. Within a period of forty years flatterers of governments based on human invention have seen their phantom appear and disappear; and each time it was such as left them nothing to desire, nothing to hope for beyond that of being French subjects or French citizens as the case happened to be. What we must have, Leoser asserts, is a "pure Judaism unconnected with and not asking anything from governments beyond being left alone, a favour which it has not enjoyed in any part of the world except America, since it ceased to rule in Palestine. We contend, accordingly, that we are not responsible for our doctrines to any civil authority; we are empowered to believe or disbelieve in a restoration as our convictions may teach us; and if we think, as we individually do, and nearly all Israel with us, that we shall be restored as a people, the state has no right to concern itself with it in the least....our sojourn in all countries under the sun may endure longer than any existing form of government will last; and still we look forward to the time when Israel shall again be a nation among nations as a matter which will of a surety take place."

3. Messiah and Public Service.

Experience proves that Jews who have believed in the change of worldly things comprised in the idea of the advent of the son of David, have been brave defenders of their adopted country on the field of battle; they have served it faithfully in council; they have aided it cheerfully with liberal loans from their hard earnings. They have enriched it by their commerce, been kind to all its sects by their beneficence. "If such can be the course of men thus thinking and believing, the state has the safest guarantee that they are friends to public order, enemies only to vice and its fruits; and that they are able to serve their country, if only their services are required, without attaching to their admissibility to equal rights the degrading condition of renouncing any portion of that which they believe is a part of their faith."

4. Messiah and Government.

Many Israelites seem to think that they would be guilty of a species of treason, especially to the liberal governments of Europe and America, to look forward to the reestablishment of the Jewish state. ⁶⁴ They perhaps fancy that if they do not disclaim all right and inheritance in David the son of Jesse, the various governments would deny them perchance the right of citizenship and an equality of privileges. They ought to realize that the utmost limits of good government have been nowhere attained. Why, therefore, a Jew should say, from a mere spirit of complaisance, that he does not believe in a bodily Messiah, and does not wish such a one to be sent on earth, is beyond our comprehension;... it only argues that he would sooner sever his connection with the present and future Judaism, than forego a single advantage which a conformity to the opinions of the world may by chance provide for him.... these factionists throw away their heavenly hopes, fancing that they will meet a political, national death, inasmuch as the lands of our exile will never see the captives return to their ancient home.

C.

The Messiah and Reason.

It is evident from the evidence thus far presented that though Isaac Leeser based his Messianic belief on Sacred Scriptures, he also called upon reason and history to point out the deficiencies in his opponent's arguments. But though he felt justified in meeting his attackers with their own weapons - just as they called Scripture to witness against him - nevertheless Isaac Leeser had a scorn for those who would establish reason and philosophy as the predominant standard for the acceptance or rejection of Jewish doctrine. He ridiculed those who claimed that the Messiah was to be an instrument of mercy for the Jewish people in their misery, source of hope in days of persecution, to be cast aside in the rebirth of freedom. The Scriptures foretell a Messiah - no matter what the state of the Jew, this prophecy will be fulfilled: "it would be difficult... if not impossible... to expound the Scriptures so as to exclude the doctrine of the redeemer and the restoration of Israel". To say that we should only view Judaism as compatible with vacillatory reason, or the changing spirit of the age, would be to strip it at once of its permanence and persistent character." We do not say that we wish to strip religion of the sanction of reason, or that we desire to prevent its harmonizing with the outward state of progress of society, where this is possible without doing violence to great and permanent principles. But we boldly maintain, says Isaac Leeser, that religious truths do not depend upon the

circumstances which influence mere human inventions; but
"even these at last are true, if proved by experience, what-
ever theorists may advance to the contrary."

Summation.

Isaac Leeser believes firmly in the advent of the Messiah, as predicted in Sacred Scriptures. There is no conflict between such a belief and our responsibilities to our country. We may believe in the Messiah and still be good citizens, deserving of all the privileges and rights of citizenship. To those who believe that Israel has a destiny - with which premise we agree - we would say: let us not endeavor to disseminate Judaism or to win converts to our Faith by unacceptable alterations. The Mission of Israel to win the world to recognize the One God may be achieved only through an insistence upon the retention of most of the Scriptural commands. To speed the day of the world's conversion and, in conformity with the prophecy of Scriptures, we look forward to the coming of the Messiah ben David. Nothing has occurred - not even the recent events in America show us freedom is advancing - that would ⁶⁸ restrain us from praying for the Messiah ben David. We look to him for redemption from the misrule of the proud and insolent. For us the sun of righteousness has not arisen; and though our bonds may be lighter, still our faith is suffering from the discrimination of those who dominate us.

With the vehemence that characterizes his style Isaac Leeser concludes his lifelong battle against^b Reform, asserting: "Let others follow the idols of the hour, and quit the fold where our people so long found security; we are for Judaism, that brave old stock of Heaven's own planting; we

are for orthodoxy, the true exposition of the Word of God; we are for the law as it was given to us from Sinai; we are for all the hopes of our race, trusting in its regeneration, in the restoration of the temple, the rebuilding of the altar, and in the reign of universal peace only and alone, under the
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beneficent sway of Moschiach ben David...."

Part Two:

The Views of Isaac M. Wise with Respect to the Messiah and Mission of Israel.

Isaac Mayer Wise, the exponent of Reform Judaism in America, was so enthused with the spirit of America that he could not imagine why any one would wish to pray for a Messiah to restore the Jewish people to Palestine. Wise planned to reform the world. As he confesses in his Reminiscences,¹ "I need not say that as idealist, dreamer and enthusiast I had shaped all things as they ought to have been. The world appeared to me most excellent, just as I wished it to be. The reforming spirit was innate in me....In addition to this, I was an enthusiast on the subject of America and freedom, and was convinced that everyone thought and felt just as I did. Consequently I could begin to reform and to improve the world."

It was when Isaac Mayer Wise discovered that everyone did not think and feel just as he did that he undertook the task of answering his opponents and preaching reform to the Jews of America. To do this, Wise was forced not only to state what he believed, but what he opposed, compelled to fight his opponents with his own criteria of authority and theirs. Thus, while arguing that Jewish life must be regulated in accordance with science and reason, he was careful to justify his beliefs and deeds on the basis of Scripture. He realized that he was in the minority and that reform might split the American Jewish community. He therefore constantly sought Jewish unity. His

plan was not to destroy the authority of Scriptures or Talmud, but to create a modern Synod to perpetuate and reinterpret the teachings of our fathers.

In the specific question of the Messiah and Mission of Israel, we shall note that these general questions of authority and principles of Jewish adjustment to the environment are raised. Upon what basis may we disbelieve in a Messiah? Why do we believe in a Mission? Is the Mission of Israel actually a result of God's punishment? These are but a few of the questions to be answered, as we take up our first topic of Wise's attitude toward the Messiah.

Chapter One:

Isaac Mayer Wise and the Messiah.

The Messiah, the anointed one, denotes wherever the term occurs in the Bible the political head, the king of the Israelitish nation. There is no passage in the Bible where this word has another signification. So declares Isaac M. Wise in volume four of the Israelite. Cyrus is called by the Prophet "His Messiah", because he was then the king over Israel. The Alexandrian school, and afterwards Christianity and Cabalism attached to the term extraordinary and extravagant ideas of a supernatural stamp. The Talmud, however, always sober in its commentaries on the Bible, knows of no other Messiah than the political head, the king of Israel and of no other national redemption than the political restoration of Israel to an independent nation. So Maimonides and other authorities understand the teachings of the Talmud in this respect.

The appearance of Bar Cochba in the time of Rabbi Akiba, and his claim to the Messiahship then acknowledged by the greatest men of Israel, notwithstanding his natural and worldly character only, and his mission to restore politically the Jewish nation, is a historical fact, and demonstrates what the Rabbin thought of the Messiah. The orthodox Jew can not believe in any other Messiah than the political head, the king of Israel, for Cabalism is no Judaism as little as Christianity is.

This is Wise's picture of the nature of the Messiah - a political head, a king of Israel. This is how he conceives

the orthodox view to be; this is therefore the connotation the term has for him. "Surprisingly," Wise writes, "we do not remember, that anybody investigated into the historical books of the Bible, in order to ascertain the merits or demerits of a claim which religious creeds ascribe to the Davidian dynasty, viz. to rule forever over Israel!" (Both Christian and Hebrew doctrine of a personal Messiah are founded on this belief.)

Wise³ proposes to make such a study. As a basis, he makes two points:

- 1). The historical books of the Bible must be understood literally, and
- 2). The historical records of the Bible are unquestionably correct.

He thus intends to meet his opponents on their own grounds by using Scripture as his authority.

A. The Davidic Dynasty's Claim to the Messiahship.

In discussing the subject of the claims of the Davidic dynasty to the Messiahship, there are three questions which must be answered; and which we shall discuss individually.

1. Was David promised a hereditary crown; also, if his successors violate the laws of God?

The fact stated in I. Samuel 16:13 that the Prophet Samuel anointed David to be king of Israel, gives no right to the dynasty; for the same prophet anointed Saul in the same manner. (Ibid. 10:10). Scripture gives us no more than the promise, that David and Solomon should be kings over Israel, that God's grace should not depart from them as it did from Saul during his lifetime, and that the immediate successor of David should build a temple. There is no more to it than this.

The promise of a hereditary crown to David was made only on condition that the descendants of David observe strictly the laws of Moses, i.e., govern the people according to the will of God expressed in His Law. And so reads the Law precisely, when speaking of the king, "In order that he (the king) may learn to fear God his Lord, to observe all the words of this law and these statutes to do them; that his heart lift itself not up above his brothers, and that he depart not from the commandment, to the right hand or the left - in order that his days may be prolonged upon his Kingdom, he and his sons among Israel.

"This, however, is no hereditary monarchy proper, for it

is bound to a condition, which if not fulfilled, gives the people a right to depose the king or his heir, for if it should not grant this right, we do not see to what purpose a condition was at all."

And then Isaac Mayer Wise cites the historical books of the Bible to prove that the people had a right to depose the King or his heir, if they violated the laws of Moses. "History", he declares, "informs us, that the people of Israel have deposed several dynasties, when their representatives became derogatory to the interests of the people by violations of the national law. This was done almost invariably with the consent and not infrequently by the instigation of the prophets, so that the divine sanction was not missing. The dynasty of Saul was deposed with the sanction of Samuel!"

Solomon was told by God, "I will surely tear the kingdom from thee and I will give it to thy servant". (I. Kings 11:11). Only after the prophet Ahijah tells Jeroboam in the name of God (Ibid. Verse 37) that he shall be king over Israel in place of David, only then do the people desert the house of David and anoint another king. In the kingdom of Israel several dynasties were deposed in the same way. We therefore may justly say, it was customary in Israel to depose a dynasty, if its representative became derogatory to the interests of the people by his violation of the national law; furthermore, that this custom was considered just and right, as the prophets sanctioned it in the name of God.

The law sanctions no violent revolutions. It provides legal means for deposing a ruler. The King was subject to two high

authorities: a supreme tribunal (Deut. XVII,3-13) and the prophet who speaks in the name of God. The king is not excepted from the laws. Wise asserts, "if the supreme tribunal and the prophet concurred in condemning a king and deposing his successors from the royal office, there was no legal power in Israel to annul this decision, nor does the Bible contain any provision⁵ to the effect that such a decision should or could be annulled." Isaac Mayer Wise therefore concludes, "we are warranted in saying, the law grants the power of deposing the king and his sons to the supreme tribunal and the prophet, or rather to the prophet the right was granted to speak publicly of the king's misdemeanor,⁵ and to the supreme tribunal to render judgment on it."

On the basis of these premises, "if we are correct, the claims of the Davidian dynasty were forfeited, and legally declared to be so, during the reign of King Solomon, and immediately after his decease."⁵

This brings us to our second question which is based upon the principle of the first regarding the forfeiture of the crown upon the violation of the laws of God.

2. Did Solomon not violate the principle and fundamental laws of God?

Wise illustrates how King Solomon violated the law; for example, with regard to wives and horses. He had too many of both. "However wise and great King Solomon was, it can not be denied, that he violated every law which the organic law prescribes to the king, hence also every condition, made to David according to his own words, to secure him a hereditary crown.

The people therefore had a right granted to them by God and common sense, to annul the claims of the Davidian dynasty, as the conditions by which this prerogative was claimed were violated." With an obvious reference to Isaac Leeser, Wise writes: "None who admits the veracity of the historical books of the Bible can gainsay this."⁵

3. Did not the vast majority of Israel reject the Davidian heir? Did the people annul the claims of the Davidian dynasty? For if they did not, the successors of Solomon held their rights de facto, to which they were not entitled de jure.

The people, with the exception of Benjamin and Judah, appointed Jerobeam king over all Israel. According to the words of God, the message of the prophet and the will of the people, (it is a divine law that the majority should rule) the Davidian dynasty was legally deposed "de jure" and "de facto" by our three authorities - God, the prophet, and the representatives of the people.⁶

This accounts for the fact, that during the next two centuries we hear no more the voice of a prophet in Judah, all the prophets are in Israel.

"Another and most remarkable fact is also that none of the successors of David was called any more the Messiah of the Lord, until four centuries after Solomon, Jeremiah called King Joash the Messiah of the Lord."⁶

Therefore, "the historical books prove beyond a doubt that

the Davidian dynasty had forfeited all its claims on the crown⁶ of Israel with the transgressions of Solomon." The vast majority of Israelites had rejected the Davidic dynasty. "Acharei Rabim Lhatos" being the law of God, it is obvious that the promise of a hereditary crown to David could not be fulfilled because Solomon violated its condition, and this violation could not be forgiven by the people. Thus we have proven, according to Isaac Mayer Wise, that the Davidic stock is not necessarily the kingly stock in Israel, and hopes for a "Messiah the son of David" are not congruent with the facts of Jewish history as revealed through Scripture - namely that the people of Israel had rejected the son of David - and not in accord with the law of God, whose precepts the House of David had transgressed.

B. The Fifty Third Chapter of Isaiah.

The 53rd chapter of Isaiah was looked upon by Christians as referring to the alleged sufferings of Jesus, and by the Cabalists and some rabbis as referring to the supposed Messiah from the tribe of Joseph, who would die previous to the advent of the right Messiah. The greatest commentators of the Bible, Isaac Mayer Wise asserts, Raschi, Ibn Ezra and Redak maintain, this chapter does not refer to the Messiah son of David, but to the people of Israel.

Wise indicates that the author of Isaiah from chapter 40-66 regarded Israel as the "servant of the Lord" - the "chosen of God" whose mission it is to bring salvation to the nations in the three-fold form of "truth, justice, and virtue" (Jer. 4:2). The honorable epithaph of the "servant of the Lord", formerly given to Moses only, is applied by this prophet to all Israel to such an extent that it becomes evident, wherever he says plainly, "my servant", or "my chosen one", he could mean none less except the nation of Israel, the "covenant people, the light of nations".

After a presentation of further evidence, Wise arrives at the following conclusions:

1. "My servant" can not refer to a Messiah, Christ, Redeemer, or to any one who died for the iniquity of others; whereas all these ideas are foreign to the prophet. (Is. 44:6) (Is. 43:11) (Is. 45:19).

2. This prophet calling "my servant", either himself or Israel, he could refer only to either.

3. Israel appearing to the prophet suffering in the captivity, and being the messenger of God to the nations, and since it can not be expected that the prophet would speak of himself - in a manner as he does in the three concluding verses - "my servant" can refer to Israel only. (Is. 53:1-9).

Isaac Mayer Wise thus proves to his satisfaction that the prophecies in Isaiah 53 refer not to a Messiah, but to the people of Israel. And the editor of the Israelite bases his proof on Scripture.

C. The Maimonidean Creed.

In 1862 Isaac Mayer Wise wrote an important article in the Israelite setting forth his objections to the fundamental doctrines of the Maimonidean Creed. In this article the editor of the Israelite challenges the twelfth article of faith by Maimonides, where he requires of the orthodox Israelite,

- "1. To believe that the Messiah of the house of David will come;
2. That this doctrine is taught in the Pentateuch;
3. To pray for the coming of the Messiah;
4. That the Messiah must be a descendant of David and Solomon."

Whoever denies any part of this article of faith is "One who denies the Lord and the words of his prophets," "he has no part in the future world," "he is excluded from the community of Israel," "he is damned here and hereafter."

Wise profoundly disagrees with this article of faith :
 10
 He declares: "If one believes the whole Bible, practices its laws and lives conscientiously according to its precepts all the days of his life; but unfortunately he does not expect a Messiah, as the Israelites at all times of political prosperity did not; or he does not pray for his coming, as our fathers never did as long as the temple of Jerusalem lasted, or he believes not that the Messiah must be a descendant of David by Solomon, as the people of ... Israel and the Maccabees together with the people to the period of the destruction of the second temple did; that poor man together with millions of our forefathers

is excluded from the community of Israel and is lost here and hereafter. Could one", demands the leader of American Reform Judaism, "advance a more unjust doctrine? History and the Jewish conception of the grace and justice of God protest revolt against it."

Maimonides, Wise reminds us, states the Messiah doctrine is contained in Numbers 23 and 24 and Deut. 30, without regard to the words of Hillel. (Hillel had said, "Israel has no Messiah". To which Raschi remarks, as Isaiah said, "But God himself redeems them"). Ibn Ezra, Wise states, was of the opinion that Numbers 24 speaks of no Messiah. Deuteronomy 30 "contains not one word that could be expounded by inference even to prophecy the coming of the Messiah. There it says in plain terms, if Israel on account of its sins shall be dispersed in foreign lands, repent its sins and return to God; He shall bring them back to their own land and bless them again more than their fathers. The regathering of Israel and the coming of the Messiah from the house of David and Solomon, are evidently two different doctrines which can not be confounded without admitting that God is the Messiah and the Messiah is God, a doctrine which Maimonides was far from admitting."

Maimonides' article of faith, Wise asserts, is sanctioned by neither Pentateuch nor Talmud. The "Pentateuch itself says nothing at all of a Messiah, especially not of a Davidian prince. If the Law imposes no such duty on Israel, who had a right to do it, if the prophets themselves were not allowed to add a commandment to it? But this be as it may, how so is one an atheist

... if he does not believe in the Messiah of the house of David?
 ... neither the Bible nor the Talmud says any such thing."

A political view of one age, declares the editor of the Israelite, is not an article of faith for another generation. According to both the prophets and the Rabbis of the Talmud, the Messiah is a political personality. Maimonides also takes this standpoint in his "^aYod". "How in the world", asks Wise,¹⁰ "could he make here a religious and fundamental doctrine of a political idea of by-gone ages? If to deny the political claims of the Davidians is synonymous with "denying God and the words of His prophets", what was Ahijah the Shilonite who in the name of God anointed Jeroboam King of Israel? (I.Kings 11:29 etc.) Why did God command Eliah to anoint Jehu King of Israel and not a Davidian prince?... Let Maimonides ", says Isaac Mayer Wise, "admit that the history of Israel testifies to the fact, a political view, or even a political institution of one age is no article of faith at any time, and no everlasting obligation: The prophets only were allowed in matters of law a temporary authority (^{לפי הדין}) but never had they a right to establish a law or doctrine for all generations. Judaism",¹⁰ concludes Isaac Mayer Wise, "is in the Pentateuch." The Article of Faith of Maimonides with reference to the Messiah is therefore illegal and the punishment for non-belief in the Messiah is likewise baseless.

D.

The Messiah and Royalty.

The following statements are typical of Wise's antagonism to the concept of the Messiah on the basis that it is contrary to the spirit of our age of enlightenment, wherein we cherish a republican form of government and regard with distaste the monarchy. In 1859, in an editorial entitled, "The Purpose of Reform", Isaac Mayer Wise writes: "Our age has new views ... which resting on scientific grounds can not be changed." For example, according to ancient conceptions of the government of society, a good and pious king was the best fortune of a nation: hence the coming of a Messiah-King to make Israel a happy nation, could be believed. But according to modern conceptions, when all civilized nations agree that an enlightened community must be a republic on the broadest basis of legal liberty, the belief in the final advent of a Messiah-King is an absurdity."

Again in 1861, in an editorial entitled, "Royalty in Israel!" The editor of the Israelite attempts to demonstrate that the institution of royalty as such is contrary to the spirit of the Mosaic Code. "The fundamental idea of the Mosaic dispensation," Wise asserts, "is: A nation must be governed by laws based on the principle of absolute justice; God is the lawgiver, and the administration of those laws is to be entrusted to such men as the people choose...." If the above is true, then "the institute of royalty in the shape which it afterwards assumed, is not only not intended by the Mosaic laws, but is directly contrary to the

spirit and tenor of the whole dispensation." Presenting Biblical quotations, Isaac Mayer Wise describes the institution of royalty¹² as being "against the laws, institutions and the very nature of the Hebrew people, and in less than one century probably it will be against the nature of all intelligent nations, and will successfully be rejected. Therefore we feel surprised," he confesses, "when Christian journals by force, want us to wait for a 'Messiah' which signifies nothing in the world except a king, a political head. Much more surprised, however, we are on hearing pious men talk of the divinity of the royal institution. It is a violation of the Law and repugnant to men's natural feelings of liberty". We can not believe, in Wise's opinion, either in a political king Messiah or the institution of royalty itself.

This point is again made in another editorial, which Wise wrote for the Israelite in 1863. Under the caption "Union Propositions", Wise admits his inability to appreciate how we can pray for a Messiah when living in this blessed land of liberty.

13

"We have come into this country", the Israelite editorial reads, "that is four-fifth of the Hebrews here - within the last thirty years. The change was sudden and dazzling. We came from the heart of despotic monarchy and exceptional laws into a free land. Can we be expected to pray in our synagogues here in the same manner as our ancestors did in the Ghetto synagogues? Can we continue our cries about affliction, oppression, persecution, where there are none; or, as republican citizens, fully satisfied with the land and its laws, can we pray God to bring us speedily back to Palestine, and give us a king of the race of David, when we do

know well we would not go to Palestine, and would break forth in open revolt if a king should be forced upon us?"

The spirit of the 19th century militated against the Messianic hope. "We ^{are} emancipated socially, politically, and mentally," an article in the Israelite declares, ¹⁴ "our rights are acknowledged and our principles and doctrines are appreciated by the best, noblest, and freest men". This is our Messianic consolation, our hope and our expectation; to the realization of which all history testifies and the 19th century bears witness. We are living in a republic, free and enlightened. We cannot, we would not hope for a kingdom, ruled by the son of David.

E. The Messiah and the Mission of Israel.

In many of his writings, Isaac Mayer Wise not only ridicules the concept of the Messiah, but together with such criticism proposes an alternative to the Messiah - a Mission of Israel, the conversion of the nations to the will of God and the achievement of peace on earth.

Wise felt not only that Scripture and the spirit of the age were against the Messianic hope, but that the plight of the Jew himself was an argument against acceptance of the Messianic concept. In an article entitled "Reform and Its Principles", Wise writes, it was chiefly the doctrine of a Messiah king, as fabricated and finished by the Cabalists, which deprived the Jews of the last spark of self-esteem and self-confidence. All the hopes of Israel and the glory of its future were taken from the nation, and the individual, to grace the head of an imaginary being. The individual, the nation was forgotten, and the Messiah King was exalted to the ideal of excellency. Israel was deprived of its immortal ideal, of the diadem set on its head by Moses and the prophets; it was deprived of the elevating consciousness, that God appointed it to be the banner bearer of divine truth, the teacher and reformer of the nations, the advocate and defender of God's sacred words; the proud hope of the final triumph of truth, the redemption of Israel by this triumph, and the liberation and fraternization of mankind, was eradicated from the consciousness of the people, and all that was excellent and glorious was concentrated around the Messiah-King, and the nation deprived

of its divine ideal, lost its self-esteem and self-confidence".

¹⁵
The obstacles, declares Wise, "must be removed, the full emancipation of the Jews must be effected. the Jew must become acquainted with history and aware of his divine mission to the nations, his destinations in morals, intellect and scholastic abilities, of his just claims on the respect and gratitude of all nations, and the hopes of its future. Israel must again be raised from the dust to self-esteem and self-confidence.

Only the surrender of the Messianic hope and the restoration of the Mission idea may enable Israel to recover this self-confidence and esteem. This thought is expressed in a later editorial ¹⁶ by the editor of the Israelite, in which he asserts that "Especially necessary at home is to raise the Israelite again to a proper estimation of himself, to elevate him to a clear conception of his historical mission to mankind. Centuries of misfortune and misery have depressed the mind of the Hebrew, he has forgotten his own value, rights and duties as the messenger of God; he has lost sight of the historical influence he exercised on the progress of humanity and the part he has yet to enact on the stage of life. The Hebrew could not find the powerful element of his religion among the heaps of leaves, dust, ice, and other materials that covered it. Priests and potentates frightened them to expose it to the world.... What was excellent and great in the Hebrew nation was ascribed to few individuals, and the whole people were condemned. They themselves," Wise asserts, "tore the divine crown from their heads, and ascribed their own mission, their duties, their hopes to one person, to a royal prince, to a Davidian Messiah; so that the Israelite himself sunk very low in his own

estimation. To elevate him again in his own eyes, make him conscious of his vocation....to recognize his mission,his worth, his relations to God and man - is the permanent duty" of Israel's leaders.

God knows that the sacred truths which Israel was called to promulgate could not be taught in the lifetime of one man. "A nation only can be immortal on earth. Jesus died. The Messiah of the Hebrews, if he had come or should come hereafter, must also die. In the lifetime of a man the work can not be done". A nation only, says ¹⁷Wise, can perform this task and God preserved wonderfully His chosen people through all centuries of authentic history, that this mission be fulfilled, that all the nations be taught and all of them appreciate the divine truth.

"The people of Israel consists of all its members, past, present and future; hence each of them has the solemn duty to contribute to this Messianic Mission of the nation. This Messianic duty is by no means one separate and distinct from the other duties of a man and a Israelite. On the contrary , they are identical.

Whoever adheres believably and confidently to the congregation of Israel, cooperates in our Messianic Mission.... Whoever lives as a messenger of consolation to weeping humanity... cooperates in our Messianic Mission.... Each of them is a Messiah", declares Wise, "and many Messiahs are necessary for the redemption of mankind. Thus every one of us can be, and should be, a missionary, engaged in the sacred work of converting souls". The Messiahship is not the exclusive property of one man, but of all Israel, whose mission it is to convert the world to

truth and righteousness.

But while Isaac Mayer Wise usually refers to Israel as the Messiah or Messianic people, he does occasionally seem to bend over backwards, in discussing the subject, to indicate his acceptance of an actual man-Messiah, if he should come. Israel, we learn for example, was assured that, though maltreated, God would not forsake them. They should not be utterly destroyed, and at last their cause should be triumphant all over the world. "He that will make an end to the bitter opposition which has been for thirty centuries the source of horrible events for the house of Israel, will therefore be the redeemer of Israel, the true Messiah, the anointed of the Lord, not only for us, but for all the world besides, inasmuch as he will bring unto them truth and peace, and happiness, and he will be called in truth the father of happiness, the prince of peace.... The nearer we come to God, and the nearer and closer the nations of the earth approach us: the nearer at hand is the time of the Messiah; and when the age will be enlightened enough, sufficiently prepared to receive a Messiah, then the Messiah will be found, and God will send his messenger to unite all the sons of Adam, to combine all the nations into one great family. And until this happy period appears in the history of mankind", concludes Wise, "18
"Israel must stand in opposition to the whole world". This passage does indicate, in addition to the obvious informational aspects, that Wise, at the writing of the article in 1865, was willing to consider a Messiah. The point is well made that the

age of the Messiah is predicated upon the achievement of enlightenment by the people themselves.

Chapter Two:

The Mission of Israel and Its Achievement.

In two lectures which he wrote for publication in the Occident, Isaac Mayer Wise defines the two fold path toward the achievement of the mission of Israel. "Providence", he¹⁹ declares, "has prepared two different ways for the people of Israel to fulfill their sacred mission, that is, to communicate the truth to all the world... either Israel must be a holy nation... living exclusively in and for God's holy word, and teach the world, from their ... home, by the living example which they set to the nations on earth; or that, if they disobey the will of God, and forget their holy mission, they must be scattered abroad among all nations for their sin and the sin of their fathers; but that, whithersoever they go, they must take God's holy word with them, and show it forth to all nations that all may see it and at last appreciate it".

According to Wise the mission may thus either be observed in Palestine, which is the first choice; or secondly, it may be fulfilled among the nations. But the latter instrument may also be a punishment for sin. The lectures of Wise in the Occident, which contain these opinions, are not altogether isolated statements.

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For in the Israelite of August 20, 1858, Wise declares, "Our first duty as a 'kingdom of Priests and a holy nation', as the covenant people and Messiah nation must be ... to teach by actions generous, just, kind and pious, that ours is the truth, the sole truth, the divine truth Israel was chosen, and

when disobedient, it was scattered among all nations to teach by just and virtuous actions, first that there is but one God, one truth and one justice, one and everlasting...."

On the other hand we have Wise's reply to the Christian charge that though Israel was a chosen nation, she had gone astray.
²¹
 Wise answers: "We can not admit this. Individuals went astray, kings sinned, the house of David failed to observe the laws of God; but Israel remained the covenant- people, the light of nations.... our fathers sinned, no doubt they sinned; but they never could sink to the low condition of Gentile nations, who just emerged about 200 years since from the lowest mire of sin and crime.... yes, after the death of Jesus the Gentile world grew much worse and more barbarous".

Some Christians attributed the dispersion of the Jews throughout the world and their oppression to their "stubborn
²²
 refusal to believe in Christianity". Therefore, it was declared, Christianity is a divine dispensation and Judaism is not. Wise answers this argument by pointing out that "there is not a family in existence that can trace its pedigree with certainty to any of the ancient nations of Europe." The only difference consists in the fact that the Hebrews offered too much resistance to the unrest of nations, and could not be neutralized, while the others were. Therefore the dispersion of the other nationalities is no longer discernable and the Jew's is. The dispersion of the Israelite is an excellent argument of the superiority of Judaism to all other religious systems". The implication is inherent in this defense that there is nothing distinctive in

itself in Israel's dispersion (though there may be in its purpose).

Isaac Mayer Wise declares that while it is true that the Jews had no land and no home for the last 18 centuries, we must not forget that none but the rulers and nobles had a land and a home. The great masses of the people in feudal states were living chattel. "The Jew was by no means as much maltreated as the poor and wretched peasant, although the latter class formed the vast majority of the people in the feudal states.... In the final analysis", concludes Wise, "the sufferings of the Jews were but light in comparison to the sufferings of the Christians by their own coreligionists". Thus experience does not show that the Jew, in being dispersed, is being punished for his rejection of Jesus.

In another article, in answer to Christian polemics, Wise asserts that "The Israelites are not in dispersion any more than any other nation, no more than the Romans, Greeks, Goths, Huns ... all of whom are dispersed over the civilized world, and reckon themselves to the nations in the midst of whom they live. So do we: We are Americans, Englishmen... distinguished from our neighbors in religion only. It is not true that we suffer on account of any sins of our forefathers".

The Christians send us missionaries to convert us to acceptance of Jesus. We send no missionaries to the Heathens and Mohammedans and not even by way of retaliation do we send any to the Christians. In listing the reasons for our refusal to dispatch missionaries throughout the world, Wise gives first

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place to the fact that "our brethren are dispersed all over the
habitable portion of the globe, and every one of them is a
missionary to our cause, by his faithful attachment thereto, and
his steady confession of God's laws".

A.

Nature of the Mission.

In the nineteenth chapter of Exodus we read, that when God called to Moses on Sinai, he said: "Ye have seen what I have done unto the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now, therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, then shall ye be unto me a peculiar treasure, above all nations; for all the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation". In these important words is expressed the mission of Israel, and the sole object of divine revelation. As it became the priest's duty to serve his God according to the best of his conviction, and to promulgate his divine knowledge to his fellow men, so became it "Israel's duty to worship the Most High, and to be henceforth the teacher of all nations, to proclaim God's holy name to the whole world.... God is the loving Father of all mankind... in all the various regions and countries are the beloved objects of his care, to all of them, Israel should reveal the divine truth, that they all may hear it and live: to this end our forefathers were elected from among all nations, to be God's peculiar treasure.... But before the Israelites can fulfill their divine mission, they ought to know themselves all the sublime truths of the revealed word".

B.

Preparation for the Mission.

The editor of the Occident sets forth as an essential prerequisite of Israel's Mission the knowledge of the law of God which she is to disseminate. Secondly, and very essential, we need English preachers to make this law understandable to the people. In an article entitled "We need English Preachers in the Synagogues", Isaac Mayer Wise writes²⁷, "Israel is the Messiah-nation... ours is the duty to enlighten mankind on the path of salvation ... we were dispersed among all nations on earth, that we instruct, enlighten, convert all of them to the true religion of the living God". But, confesses Wise, we are not able to address the people in a tongue they understand. He therefore calls for English preachers in the Synagogue. This reform was later to be adopted by even orthodox congregations.

It was Isaac Mayer Wise's conviction that, in order for the Jews to acquire experience, they "ought to have and actually had a country of their own, where they could fully enjoy their heavenly property... where they could educate²⁸ and strengthen themselves for their great mission". They were "to educate themselves in their mode of thinking, feeling, acting, and speaking to be the teachers of all other nations, to be the priests of the Most High... but also to prepare and strengthen themselves to meet all the oppositions, all the hardships and oppressions... that would befall them in the process of their history, in the fulfillment of their divine mission, if they disobeyed the will of Providence and went

astray, if they did not pursue the path which the hand of the Almighty had pointed out to them... to learn to meet with hardships and oppressions, and still not lose confidence in God and His divine instruction, for it is evident that we Israelites must fulfill our mission...."

While, in one article, Wise may have emphasized the importance of Palestine as a source of preparation, in an address, at the dedication of a temple in Lafayette, Indiana, he declared not only that "Israel's Messiah has come with the victory of liberty and justice", but that "The Messiah of humanity, the redemption of the nation, goes forth from this country, while the law and the word of God comes out of Zion and of Jerusalem . Israel's sanctuary on this virgin soil of freedom is the Zion and Jerusalem".

C. The Psychology of the Mission.

In addition to demonstrating through Scripture and history that Israel has a mission, Isaac Mayer Wise presents a psychological basis for this mission. In an article entitled "The Future of Judaism", he offers what he termed the "teleological argument" for the Mission. The argument is as follows: "every human being has a double destiny to fulfill, one to himself as an individual, and another to mankind as a part thereof.... The same is in the case with nations who are but aggregates of individuals and consequently must bear all the characteristics of the persons of which they are composed. Therefore every nation has a double destiny to fulfill, one to itself, which consists in securing to itself the greatest amount of happiness within its reach, and another to the human family, which consists in its cooperation with the rest of mankind in the progress and elevation of human nature and human affairs. Nations like individuals are free to understand and prosecute their respective destinies and make themselves happy and useful.... Whenever a thing fails to fulfill its destiny, it is dead, and nature drops it to transform it into an object which fulfills its destiny.... every nation fulfills a destiny or it dies".

"Israel is a nation. It is not a people as we of the United States are, or as those of Great Britain; it is the only nation which can surely lay claim to this name. It is not a political community, still it is a unit....hence it fulfills a destiny, or else the All-wise and Almighty would not permit it to exist."

The special destiny of Israel is the cause that Providence would not permit it to be submerged in the current of passing events. It lives, because it continues to fulfill its destiny.. ..What is this destiny?.... we know that they have only one destiny separate from the nations with which they are one in every other point, and this destiny is to bear, preserve, practice and promulgate their religion and their religious literature". Israel can not be extinguished - three thousand years have proved this - because it continually fulfills its destiny. This destiny being the perpetuation and the promulgation of Judaism, we know that Judaism has a future, and we know it as certain as we know that the sun will rise tomorrow in the East and set in the West". The Mission of Israel sustains Israel with life.

In an earlier article Wise similarly says that nations like individuals must have an ideal. Thus only may they maintain themselves ³¹ "upon the lofty summits of national strength, morality, energy, and inspiration. The Mosaic legislation gave an ideal to Israel, the noblest ever given to a nation. It was every way calculated to arouse their energies, and to hold them above the level of the roaring ocean of mutations. They were told to be a nation of priests, the champions of truth, the consecrated servants of the Lord, who were charged to combat against fiction, and to bear the banner of truth. They were not charged to fulfill their mission by the force of the sword, they should obey and

practice the law of the Lord in their own country and so convince the nations by their own prosperity, that those laws were wise and good. and they were 'a wise and intelligent people'. Therefore, the most severe punishment for civil crimes was 'careth', 'to be cut off from the community of Israel', to have no part in the ideal of the nation; and the most eminent act could only be to approach nearest to the national ideal, to become the preacher of truth, a prophet". Israel as a people dedicated itself to this national ideal - of truth.

Isaac Mayer Wise was firmly convinced of the necessity of Israel's Mission in the modern world. He was of the opinion that revolutions in the various religious systems came directly or indirectly from the influence of our ancestors, of Judaism.
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 "Today", says Wise, "we stand at the eve of a great revolution in all religious systems: the orthodox creeds of all systems must break down....People...will soon long after plain, simple and resonable doctrines, to liberate themselves from the bondage of superstition...."

"In all religious revolutions history records we healed the wounds of suffering humanity; we gave the nations something better for that which they lost; we brethed divine spirit in the dead bones... this is our mission, the cause of our existence, the object of our godly covenant".

We have already given to the world important legislation, literature and men. To the modern age, says Wise, we have given

our Spinoza, Maimon, Mendelssohn, Boerne, Heine, Valentin, Gans and Maier Hirsch. At all times we gave such men to the world. From Abraham and Moses down through the psalmists and prophets... our sons were the banner bearers of truth, philosophy, mathematics etc.. "we were and are the only efficient opposition to fiction... bigotry and errors in the province of religion".

If we agree on this, then every measure must be taken to preserve our religion, our sacred heritage, our synagogue schools. "Truth must be the main object of these institutions ... Truth is the Messiah and instruction is the prophet Elijah who precedes the former. The triumph of truth is the reign of the Messiah, the kingdom of heaven on earth....³³ Only thus may Israel redeem the world - through adequate preparation of itself.

Chapter Three:

Ceremonies and the Mission of Israel.

Isaac Mayer Wise regarded the preservation of ceremonies as necessary to the preservation of Judaism and the achievement of Israel's mission. It was not his belief that the ceremonies were of importance to the nations of the world, but to Israel herself whom they would bind until the nations accepted divine truth.

One of the most important series of articles on this subject was composed in 1855 following the Cleveland Conference. In his Reminiscences ^{of} The editor of the Israelite declares that the pet project which was continually in his thoughts was the union of the congregations of America, by firm organization and harmonious cooperation. The first attempt to accomplish this in 1848 had proved unsuccessful. Yet the ideal remained attractive as ever to him. He agitated the matter in the public press until finally the idea assumed concrete form in August, 1855, when a call was issued to the ministers and delegates of the various congregations to assemble in Cleveland on Oct. 17, 1855. Orthodox rabbis joined with reform in signing the call. The Conference itself agreed to create a Synod, whose leading principles were to be the following:

1. The Bible as delivered to us by our fathers and as now in our possession, is of immediate divine origin, and the standard of our religion.

2. The Talmud contains the traditional. legal, and logical exposition of the Biblical laws which must be expounded and practiced according to the comments of the Talmud.
3. The resolutions of the Synod, in accordance with the above principles, are legally valid.
4. Statutes and ordinances, contrary to the laws of the land, are invalid."

Such a torrent of abuse met the principles adopted by the Cleveland Conference, which Wise had hoped would bring unity into Israel, that he felt compelled to answer these attacks in detail in the Israelite. In a series of articles he takes to task both "ultra parties" in Israel. With bitterness he evaluates both groups: Extreme reformers would drop the Talmud, the historical laws, the historical basis of Judaism! They say, "The spirit of Judaism suffices us". The extreme orthodox would adhere to every iota of the Talmud. "Immutable sameness in every minute particular".³⁵ This and only this is true Judaism. Wise comments that we "have just enough of Judaism in ourselves to know that extremes are dangerous.... Judaism is a living active power; therefore there can be no... stagnation... there must be a steady and incessant progress within the pale of Judaism. The end and aim of this steady and incessant progress is, that Judaism developes gradually its universal character,

divests itself of its peculiarly national garment, in the same ratio as the Gentiles are saved from their erroneous doctrines and inherited misconceptions, until there will be fulfilled the words of the prophet, 'That day there will be God one, and his name one'.... Then there will be no longer a necessity for the union of Israel: for there will be a union of mankind in sentiments and conviction. This is the Messianic idea of the prophets. This is the mission of Israel. Therefore we were dispersed among all nations to build up the grand temple in which all mankind worship the God of truth. Israel must remain, its history and the voice of the prophets teach it - a distinguished nation, until the nations have received our divine mission".

But, say our ultra reformers, "this time has come, the golden age is at our door, we only need to open
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our arms, all mankind will hasten into our embrace". The truth, however, is that mankind stands miserably low in religious conceptions. The vast bulk of mankind consists of heathens with ridiculous theories and abominable practices.

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But the ultra-reformers say, "we admit the necessity of a union of Israel for the sake of our national mission; still we need no forms, no outward signs to unite Israelites; we are united by the essence, the lofty spirit, the sublime doctrines of our religion, of which no Israelite in no clime and in no zone can be divested. This sounds elegantly", comments Wise, "but it is not true. Man... must have

forms, to give expression to the ideas and sentiments of his mind...." If the old forms are removed, Wise declares, new forms will "develope themselves in the course of time" and in a few short years "the Jewish congregations would no more recognize each other than the Protestant sects do now. The sameness of principles would as little prevent us from such a miserable state of our religious union, as it prevents now the different Protestant sects from condemning each other publicly.... Israel must and will remain one peculiar nation until our mission is fulfilled".

Wise thus denounces both extreme groups in Judaism who block the implementation of the Cleveland Conference principles. In a second article entitled "No Talmud" Wise becomes more specific in his denunciation. His editorial in the Israelite burns with wrath and sarcasm : "No Talmud, they say; but they confess, Israel has a sublime mission in the moral history of mankind. Union and uniformity, outward signs and forms are at least expedient, to accomplish the sublime task which is the end and aim of Israel's long and painful sojourn among the nations. You will make us now new forms in place of the old? But who will adopt them? How many of Israel will they unite?" "None shall impose customs, laws or forms on us which we dislike.

"The ultra-reformers, it appears, are aware of this state of affairs, and therefore it is their avowed theory, that such Biblical forms and ceremonies which are still sacred in the estimation of the vulgar mass, must be retained: but

those which are commonly violated must be dropped". Therefore, concludes Isaac M. Wise, this would mean that the most important Biblical precepts and customs - the Sabbath, Milah, Yom Kippur, Niddah and Tebilah, Shechitah and Bedikah, the festivals and the laws on unclean beasts, or other Biblical precepts and ancient customs, should be abolished, if there is a congregation who violates them. The Talmud, Wise declares, interprets and explains the Bible. Without Talmudic traditions, without these "connecting links", it is impossible to comprehend Judaism, Christianity or the Bible.

In a third article entitled "No Talmud", Wise, with a vigorous pen, epitomizes the two previous essays. "This", he says, "is the result of our investigation....: Israel is the messianic nation. The mission requires an outward uniformity of the religious forms and customs of the whole nation. The Biblical laws, those not relating especially to the land of Palestine - are the outward means for the protection of the essence of our religion, and the bonds of Israel's union, which must last as long until all nations have become one Israel.... But we maintain that this golden age is remotely distant from us; therefore Israel's union must be preserved for its messianic aim, which can be effected only by a uniformity in its outward religion. The means to this outward uniformity are the Biblical laws which our ultra-reformers are anxious to reject. These Biblical laws only then produce a uniformity, if they are understood in the same way, in Asia as in America, in Africa and in Australia, to which end the interpretations

of the Talmud are independently necessary".

Amidst all of this evidence testifying to Wise's support of Talmudic authority, we must not lose sight of the fact that

1. These articles were in defense of the principles he advocated at the Cleveland Conference.
2. The Conference was intended "only and exclusively... to effect a union of the American Israelites".
3. Wise's main emphasis at the Conference itself was on the Synod, which was to interpret the Talmud in accordance with modern times. Wise favored reform of the Talmud, but "legal reform".

Quite an abrupt change in emphasis is evident in Wise's attitude towards ceremonies in the years following the Cleveland Conference. While in 1858 he still preached that the retention of religious forms was essential to the fulfillment of the mission,³⁸ in later years he was inclined to think less of "legal" reform and more of universalizing the religion of Israel, despite the refusal of the extremists to cooperate.

In 1862, in a lengthy article analyzing the "Differences of Conception" between the orthodox and reform viewpoint, he³⁹ declares: "We care less for the form than the essence, and bestow less attention on ceremonies than the object to be reached by them, because it grieves us to see the servant claim equal consideration to the master of the house". "Is it our fault", he asks the orthodox, "that you can not see the forest on account of your observances?[?] The words of God were entrusted to Israel

to perpetuate and promulgate them among all nations, and you place the light of truth behind the opaque barriers of your observances and errors. God appointed us to redeem mankind from the burden of... oppression; but you make slaves of yourselves, slaves of priests living and dead, slaves of forms, observances and prejudices, slaves of laws and customs from other lands and climes and ages. That much is true then", Wise concludes, "only that portion of Judaism which will and must become the common good of all men, is religious to us, and only in this respect we are Jews; all other laws, ordinances, customs and usages... have a secondary importance to us, it is the object and not the means we reflect upon".

In 1866, in a sermon delivered at the dedication of the Temple Bnai Yeshurun of Cincinnati, Wise condemned the hope in miracles and a Messiah. He associated this hope with those who desire ⁴⁰ "the separation of Israel from the Gentile world, and lay the chief stress, not upon the elements of universal religion, but upon laws and observances which characterize Israel as a peculiar and distinct people, which one day will return to Palestine, to be governed by the Messiah....Having no Palestine, no Messiah, and no miracles, we have a country where we are...and the mission of Israel returns to Israel itself. Therefore we put much less stress on peculiar observances and laws, and much more on the elements of universal religion and the mission of Israel".

Universal religion over rabbinism was advocated in

even clearer terms in 1868 by the editor of the Israelite.

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Discussing "The Judaism of the Future", Wise declared:

"Gradually we are 'coming out' from rabbinism to the universal religion of Israel. We have lived sixteen centuries in the rabbinical forms; it is difficult to forget, although we have outgrown them.... The vitality and divine spirit of Judaism are best demonstrated by this very ability to pass through all ... changes in all ages of history.... Only those who look upon Judaism as the national and exclusive property of the Jews can mourn the gradual decay of national forms, and feel no consolation in the triumphs, which universal religion achieves with every passing year. As the fruit forms, the blossoms fall. The more ideas and principles become general, the less can they be pressed into small national forms. The better the idea is understood and appreciated, the less it needs or tolerates a form. The idea is breaking the form, that is the pulsation of the age." This rejoicing at the decay of forms is no little departure in emphasis from a statement less than two decades earlier, in which Wise declares that until peace and brotherhood and truth are established on earth

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"Israel's mission is not at an end, and so long must we uphold our nationality with all the signs and tokens with which God has marked us, with all our Biblical ceremonies by which we know each other in all the different parts of the world; but we are not obliged to teach them to the gentiles". There seems to have been some "evolution" in Wise's thought, and perhaps in the state of mankind.

This we may securely say: Isaac Mayer Wise before and shortly after the Cleveland Conference supported Talmudic legislation; but at the same time regarding ceremonial he looked forward to the establishment of a Synod to pass legal reforms in the ritual. He regarded ceremonial important for the preservation of Israel as a people, and for the preservation of Israel's Mission. Ceremonial could be relinquished the closer the Mission would come to fulfillment. In no case would we expect the Gentile to adopt the ceremonial legislation or practice. The implication is therefore clear: Ceremonies are a means to the achievement of divine truth and world peace. Once the ethical laws of God are established on earth, there is no further need for ceremonies. As the years passed a doubt seems to have arisen in Wise's mind as to the need of ceremonies in holding Israel together, or even as to the wisdom of separating Israel into a distinctive people through ceremonial. But his attitude was by no means as universalistic as that of the extreme reformers nor as "nationalistic" as that of the extreme orthodox.

Chapter Four:

Minhag America.

One of the chief weaknesses of the reform position during the controversy over the doctrines of Judaism was that reformers prayed in one way and preached in another. While declaring their nonbelief, for example, in resurrection of the dead, they daily prayed that God might effect such a miracle. While asserting their opposition to any reaturation of Israel to Palestine, they offered daily appeals to God for just such a restoration. And while attacking the concept of the Messiah, the reformers regularly gave lip service to the hope that he might deliver Israel from oppression. Both orthodox and reformer realized the incongruity and hypocrisy of this situation.

A movement therefore arose to revise the traditional orthodox prayer book. Isaac Mayer Wise, in commenting on Isaac Leeser's edition and translation of the daily prayers, shows their "inconsistency" with modern life":

In examining the eighteen benedictions he asks, "what American citizen can honestly pray to God, 'O, look upon our afflictions, we beseech Thee, and plead our cause; redeem us speedily for the sake of Thy name' etc.; or 'O send the great cornet as a signal for our freedom and lift the banner to collect the captives, and gather us together from the four corners of the earth. Blessed are Thou, O Lord! who gatherest together the outcasts of Thy people Israel!'; or what American citizen

can honestly pray to God, that He reestablish the monarchical throne of David?... in all these passages there is no trace of a spiritual redemption, nor the final triumph of truth, or the approach of the Messianic kingdom of justice, truth and fraternity; but of the restoration of political liberty, a political king, a political nationality.

"Those who wish to live on this free soil are granted every liberty imaginable, and dare not pray for the restoration of a kingdom, or rather, in fact, would not do it; and those who wish to return to Jerusalem can do so now quite conveniently".⁴³

Isaac Mayer Wise concludes his comments on the various prayers with the question,⁴⁴ "Should not these and similar passages be omitted in our prayers? We think they should, and, therefore, a revision is necessary. We have as much right to do so...as the Rev. Isaac Leeser had to alter the *P'J'ESNDI* and to introduce a passage asking that the officers of the United States be kind to us Jews.

In another article, wherein he expresses dissatisfaction with praying for the restoration politically of the dynasty of David, Wise asserts that⁴⁵ "there is no law in existence ordaining, that one must or should pray for the coming of the Messiah." Therefore, he declares, expediency must be consulted.⁴⁵ "We maintain", he continues, "that all passages of this kind should have no place in our prayer book, and, therefore, it should be revised; because;

1. Two thirds of the American Israelites neither expect nor wish the coming of the Messiah king, and the prayer book

should be the common good of all.

2. It is a deplorable inconsistency or hypocrisy, to be a republican in sentiment and practice, and a royalist in prayer.
3. The oldest prayers extant not only make no mention of the Messiah, but conclude with the words of the prophet Isaiah: "Our Redeemer is God Zebaoth, the Most holy of Israel is His name!" The Sabbath prayers, Hakkol Yoducho etc., the recency of which is apparent from the alphabetical order of El Adon were the first to mention the time of the Messiah.

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It was Wise's belief that "our orthodox brethren can not induce five hundred persons in this country to pray sincerely for their return to Palestine, or for the restoration of a kingdom in Israel, or the restoration of bloody sacrifices". "The prayer for the restoration of a kingdom, and a personal king of whatever dynasty," he declared, "is sinful and unJewish".

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It was in 1846 that Isaac Mayer Wise first undertook to correct the evils of the prayerbook. Dr. Max Lillienthal, beloved benefactor and colleague of Wise during the early battles of reform, had formed the idea of founding a synagogal authoritative body, a sort of consistory, that was to go by the old Jewish name of Beth Din. Wise, together with Felsenheld and Kohlmeyer, with Lillienthal as head, were consecrated members of the Beth Din. Work was apportioned among these men and Wise was assigned the task of composing a Minhag America. Wise worked industriously

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at his task, had plans ready for it by the spring of 1847, went to New York to submit it to the Beth Din, only to learn that it had been dissolved. Working without the encouragement or cooperation of his colleagues, Wise completed the Minhag. As he declared, "We were forced to a change of the prayer-book,⁴⁹ and therefore we did change it".

"Minhag America" signifies the liturgy of the American Synagogue of which the first part was published in 1857 and introduced in several congregations. By 1862 the fourth edition of that volume was already out.

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The impartial reader, Wise reminds us, must admit two points:

1. There are numerous passages in the old liturgy which, having been intended for other times and localities, and written under circumstances and impressions foreign to the citizens of a free land - must be omitted or amended.
2. We have the same right to make a Minhag America, as our ancestors had to make a Minhag Poland, Minhag Germany, Minhag Portugal etc.

The Minhag America makes a number of doctrinal changes in the prayerbook. We shall discuss those relating to the Messiah. For example the Mincha Amidah reads⁵¹ Thou "rememberest the covenant of Thy ancestors, and bringest redemption to their descendants on account of Thy great name in love". "Redeemer" is thus changed to "redemption".

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The Minhag America reads "O behold the oppression of our brethren, and redeem them speedily, for Thou art a mighty Redeemer". The "brethren" are oppressed and not we ourselves, as the orthodox prayerbook states.

Thirdly, the "Tekah Beshofar", instead of referring to our freedom and the gathering of our exiles as in the orthodox prayer book,⁵³ reads, "Let resound the great trumpet for the liberty of all nations; lift up the banner to unite them in the covenant of peace; and bring them nigh unto Thee, to worship Thee in truth. Blessed be Thou, who lovest the community of nations". The prayer is thus broadened to include not Israel alone, but all mankind.

The "773 hns Jhc" is omitted in the Minhag America from the Shabbas ritual altogether. In the weekday Schacherit⁵⁴ it is thus altered: "Let sprout, O Lord, our offsprings with the descendants of Thy servants, and bend their hearts toward Thee, that they may walk in Thy ways and promote and glorify Thy laws. Increase their strength by Thy salvation; for which we daily wait. Praised be Thou, God, who art our might of salvation".

In the Kiddush⁵⁵ for Friday evening Wise omits the phrase "from all nations". In the "Uvnuchoh Yomar", while including the Messianic reference in the Hebrew, he omits the verse in the English translation. In the grace after meal⁵⁷ the "pend JIN'S D33" is deleted.

The Minhag America was a milestone in the history of Judaism in America. As Edward Calisch wrote in a memorial⁵⁸ tribute to Isaac Mayer Wise, "As with prophetic vision he called the prayerbook he wrote 'Minhag America'. It was to express not only the spiritual ideals, the hopes and aspirations, but no less so the patriotism of the American

Jews". It was also to serve as one of the bases for the contemporary Union Prayer Book. Due to the resourcefulness of Isaac M. Wise Reform was able to cast off its hypocrisy in prayer. Its prayers and aspirations were now one."

Wise had waited for years to establish a Synod, which would give official sanction to such a Minhag America. He had high hopes for the Cleveland Conference of 1855; but it came to nothing. The Minhag was all that was left of it. Wise promised that despite the fact that he had wearied of waiting for a Synod to establish legal reform⁵⁹, "Whenever the congregations will adopt the status quo, and pass laws in favor of a Synod to conduct uniformly and lawfully the development of the American Synagogue, we shall be the first to cooperate fully and conscientiously". That he abided by this promise is borne out by history.

Isaac Mayer Wise was a pioneer, a courageous exponent of reform in America. He was not an irresponsible radical, nor a weak appeaser. He loved his people too dearly to be either. In his lifetime he sought to achieve reform in America. But as he himself said, the millenium may not come through one man. Through emphasis on the Mission of all Israel, he succeeded in reawakening the American Jew to his task in achieving a just and righteous world order. Through his legal approach to the Messiah concept Isaac Mayer Wise established Reform Judaism as an integral part of the chain of Jewish tradition. Through his support of ceremonial he inspired men to the realization that practical

Jewish observance was not inconsistent with universalism.
We are grateful to Isaac Mayer Wise for guiding reform
along the highway tread by Klal Yisrael, for helping the
American Jew to reconcile Judaism with his American home.

C o n c l u s i o n s

A Comparison of the Views of Isaac Leeser and Isaac Mayer Wise
 With regard to the Messiah and Mission of Israel.

Throughout the centuries the Jew has found himself a member of a minority amidst a gentile environment. He has preferred not to assimilate, but to preserve his unique heritage. Oppression and discrimination have not succeeded in altering his course. For he felt that he had a contribution to make to humanity, a mission to accomplish on earth.

The problem of the Messiah and Mission of Israel is actually one of purpose and survival. Isaac Leeser looked forward to the redemption of his people and the salvation of mankind through a Messiah. Isaac Mayer Wise could not reconcile the Messianic concept to a democratic world. He believed in the Mission of all Israel, wherein Israel as a people would continue to preach and seek a better world through divine truth. This was Israel's reason for survival.

Isaac Leeser, who expounded the orthodox or conservative point of view, believed in a Messiah, who possessed both temporal and spiritual qualities. The Messiah son of David would govern the people of Israel who are to be "assembled again into one state". Though his rule might necessarily be achieved through his temporal qualities - through war - his kingship would be a period of universal blessing. Though he might not arrive until the people were ready for his advent, there is a time beyond which he will not be delayed. Belief in the Messiah, according

to Isaac Leeser, is "a matter of credence", "ordained as the will of God". Both Scripture and the prayer book testify to his coming.

These assumptions are vigorously challenged by Isaac Mayer Wise who ridicules the hope for a political king in this age of enlightenment, where civilized peoples have a republican form of government. A political view of one age, he declares, is not an article of faith for another generation. It is inconceivable how one can believe that the Mission of Israel is the function of one man. In the first place, the Davidic dynasty had forfeited its claims on the crown of Israel with the transgression of Solomon. Secondly, Scripture preaches redemption through Israel, not through an individual. This perpetual hope that some day a descendant of David would miraculously appear and restore our people to Palestine has been an abomination to the morale and initiative of our people. The Messianic hope has deprived the Jew of his self-esteem and self-respect. Under the delusion that the solution to his ^{and} world problem rests with a mysterious Messiah, he bides his time, waiting for the Messiah's advent. It is time that he realized that the Mission can not be the function of one man. It is the task of the entire people of Israel.

How may the Mission of Israel be achieved? Scripture informs us that it may be achieved either through the example of Israel on her native, holy soil; or, if Israel sins, in the lands of dispersion. As for Israel's ceremonies and distinctive legislation, it is Wise's conviction that they must be retained until

the nations accept divine truth. For they are essential to the unity and preservation of Israel. Wise's views on this subject evolved with the years, but he never did relinquish his conviction that, though of a secondary character, and not to be hoisted upon the nations as a condition of their "conversion", yet the ceremonies of Judaism were important to the preservation of the core of Judaism. This core, he later believed, might be better appreciated if uncovered, but the earlier evidence in behalf of ceremonial indicates his deep appreciation of their function.

While expressing his agreement with the doctrine that Israel has a destiny as a people, Isaac Leeser bitterly attacks reformers who would strip Judaism of its forms in order to convert the world. Rather, he declares, let the nations adopt the forms of Judaism. Whereas Isaac Mayer Wise believed that when the nations would accept divine truth as preached through Judaism, the Jewish people could dispense with its distinctive religious forms, Isaac Leeser termed this a heresy. As if the ideal Judaism or religion were one without religious forms! Judaism, he proclaimed, must not cater to the peoples of the world. If they wish to accept Judaism, they must accept its precepts. Only in that way did Isaac Leeser favor a Mission of Israel, a mission which would recognize the integrity and distinctiveness of Judaism in contradistinction to a pagan world.

One of the chief arguments wielded by Isaac Mayer Wise against the concept of the Messiah was that it was both contrary to the spirit of the age and to our obligations

as citizens of a free and enlightened republic. Isaac Leeser defended himself against Wise's attacks by tracing the history of enlightenment and of liberal governments. In each case, he declared, foolish Israel placed its faith in some king, a Napoleon, a Louis, a Roman puppet,^{ALL OF}† whom reigned for a few years and then were toppled from their throne. Israel's hopes rose and fell with these Messiahs. Far better, declared Leeser, to put one's faith in the will of God, as prophesied through Scripture.

There is, after all, no conflict between believing in a Messiah, who may not come for millenia, and loyalty to one's country. For centuries Jews believed in the Messiah, and behold what excellent contributions in men, literature and science we have made to the world. Our patriotism is unquestioned. For no conniving is required to prepare Israel for her restoration. Only good deeds and dedication to the word of God are important.

But Wise could not be convinced. Nor could Leeser be persuaded by the arguments of his reform opponent. Both besmirched each other viciously in public print. Even in his Memorial tribute to Leeser, Wise could not refrain from ~~casting~~^{cas} subtle aspersions upon his ability and integrity. The battle was too important to both men to allow moderation.

To Leeser, for example, denial of a Messiah constituted a denial of Scriptural authority. For centuries the Jew had prayed for a Messiah - if not Scripture, custom proved the authenticity and legitimacy of this hope. How could one

change the promise of the word of God. How could one alter prayers which had been the life blood of our people through ages of persecution! But Wise did. Basing his opposition on Scriptural and logical grounds, he asserted that he was prepared to support the authority of the Talmud, but that that authority must be perpetuated in our lifetime. We too, through a legal body, must be able to interpret the Talmud in accordance with our times. If the orthodox or radical reformers will not support such a synod, we, in cooperation with other Jewish leaders of similar views, will make the necessary changes in doctrine and practice.

The controversy of Wise and Leeser is important today, because its modern implications are obvious. We have the identical questions of loyalty, of forms, of authority, of the salvation of mankind. Leeser and Wise argued the problem in their day. We continue. Reform Judaism is still young. It is yet feared by the orthodox. It must prove its loyalty not to America alone but to Klal Yisrael. Oh, that a Leeser and a Wise might once again convoke a Cleveland Conference and establish for American Jewry a basis of legal reform. That was the spirit in which Wise approached his attempts to adjust Judaism to contemporary life. That was the spirit to which Leeser gave his temporary approval.

Finis.

Notes and References.

Part One.

1. Discourses, Leeser, Vol. 2, P. 328.
See also Occident, Vo. 2, P. 45; Leeser condemns Christian view of Messiah.
2. Ibid, P. 332.
3. Ibid, P. 334
4. Ibid, P. 336
5. Ibid, P. 337
6. Ibid, P. 3376,
7. Catechism, Leeser, P. 97
8. Ibid, P. 98
9. Ibid, P. 99
10. Ibid, P. 102
11. Ibid, P. 103
12. Ibid, P. 104
13. Jewish Creed, Leeser, P. 134
14. Occident, Leeser, Vol. 3, P. 483
15. Ibid, P. 485
16. Ibid, P. 486
17. Ibid, Vol. 5, P. 62
18. Ibid, Vol. 12, No. 2, P. 540
19. Ibid, Vol. 3, p. 486
20. Ibid, Vol. 18, P. 150
21. Ibid, Vol. 1, No. 4, P. 160
22. Discourses, Vol. 2, see Chapters 44-50.

23. Occident, Vol. 8, No. 6, P. 265
24. Ibid, P. 267
25. Ibid, Vol. 16, P. 419
26. Ibid, P. 421
27. Ibid, Vol. 18, No. 2, P. 9
28. Ibid, Vol. 18, No. 6, P. 32
29. Ibid, No. 13, P. 78
30. Ibid, P. 79
31. Ibid, No. 15, P. 89
32. Ibid, No. 13. June 22, 1860, P. 79
33. Ibid, No. 15, July 5, 1860, P. 89
34. Ibid, P. 90
35. Ibid, No. 16, July 12, 1860, P. 96
36. Ibid, No. 25, Sept. 13, 1860, P. 149
37. Ibid, Vol. 14, No. 5, August, 1856, P. 205
38. Ibid,
39. Ibid, Vol. 16, No. 7, Oct. 1858, P. 321
40. Ibid, P. 322
41. Ibid, P. 323
42. Ibid, P. 326
43. Ibid, P. 327
44. Ibid, Vol. 14, No. 3, June 1855, P. 104

45. Occident, Vol. 21, Oct. 1863, P. 295
46. Ibid, Vol. 16, No. 8, Nov. 1858, P. 370
47. Ibid, P. 371
48. Ibid, P. 372
49. Ibid, Vol. 21, P. 295
50. Ibid, Vol. 21, P. 296
51. Ibid, Vol. 16, P. 372
52. Ibid, Vol. 16, P. 373
53. Ibid, P. 374
54. Ibid, P. 375
55. Ibid, Vol. 21, P. 298
56. Ibid, Vol. 7, P. 10
57. Ibid, Vol. 7, P. 11

In vol. 14, P.10, Leaser also asserts the following: "There is moreover no absurdity in our faith, no treason against the state; for, as regards the first, the whole course of history proves that something great in the regeneration of man is expected and impending; and, as regards the second point, we can and should serve the states where we live with an earnest zeal and an unswerving obedience to the laws of the land, second only to our duty to the commands of God; by which means we can best prove that we wish to identify ourselves in every respect with the countries where we are protected, while the time has not arrived in which we are to be restored as one nation with our own government".

57. In Vol. 18, No. 17, P. 103, Leaser also writes a stirring article on the conflict between ~~Orthodox~~ and ~~Reform~~, entitled, "Why do we hide it?": "These new Jewish sectarians," he declares, "tell us that we hope in vain for the coming of the Messiah, and that we are blind in not recognizing him in the prevailing spirit of the nineteenth century. Those demi-Jews...tell us...that we have lost our character as the chosen people of the Lord, while they are the real Israelites: that we are ^{an} dispersed nation, and they are Americans, Germans etc. ; that we are looking in vain for a future restoration - a hope which prevents us from becoming real patriots, and that they are looking for their redemption in the simple coming of the whole world to embrace their peculiar religious system, when their anointed saviour, the holy spirit of civilization of the nineteenth century will be worshipped by all men.... Why do we hide it, that they have more contempt for us than for the Christians? they assail the latter on account of their belief in their Messiah, who, according to their notions, has come, and they assail us on account of our belief in the Messiah who is yet to come. Why do we hide it, that they have established a false Messiah, namely, the Messiah of reason? The French Messiah of the eighteenth century pronounced to the Americans by... Paine?"

See: Vol. 18, August 9, 1860, No. 20 for further discussion of the Messiah and patriotism. Also Vol. 22, May and June, 1864, for prosecution of Dr. Graetz on charges of denying the Messiah.

57. Also Vol. 24, No. 1, April 1866, for further reference
to the Messiah and patriotism.
58. Occident, Vol. 7, P. 6
59. Ibid, Vol. 7, P. 10
60. Ibid, Vol. 7, P. 6
61. Ibid, P. 7
62. Ibid, P. 9
63. Ibid, P. 10
64. Ibid, Vol. 14, April 1856, P. 6
65. Ibid, Vol. 8, P. 333
66. Ibid, Vol. 7, P. 5
67. Ibid, Vol. 8, P. 330
68. Ibid, Vol. 25, April 1867, P. 12

Part Two

1. Reminiscences, Wise, P. 49
2. Israelite, Vol. 4, P. 28
3. Ibid, Vol. 4, No. 29, Jan. 22, 1858, P. 228
4. Ibid,

The Israelite, Vol. 4, No. 40, April 9, 1858, P. 316
presents in brief form the five questions basic to
our discussion of the claim of the Davidic Dynasty to
the Messiahship

5. Ibid, Feb. 5, 1858, No. 31, P. 236
6. Ibid, Vol. 4, Feb. 12, 1858, No. 32, P. 252

Also see Vol. 4, Feb. 5, 1858, No. 31, P. 244

7. Ibid, Vol. 5, No. 32, Feb. 11, 1859, P. 252

Also see Vol. 5, No. 40, April, 8, 1859, P. 316; and
Vol. 5, No. 42, April 22, 1859, P. 332

Also see the Occident, Vol. 22, No. 4, July 1864, P. 145-156:
Leeser, though admitting that many commentators apply

Isaiah 53 to the people of Israel, asks, "But even in this
light, may it not be regarded as a prediction of the
times of the Messiah? for how is the blessing foretold to
be accomplished unless by some special agent, since God
always acts through human messengers who become merely
the instruments to effect His will?

8. Ibid, Vol. 5, P. 252
9. Ibid, Vol. 8, No. 31, Feb. 21, 1862, P. 268

In Vol. 13, No. 22, Dec. 7, 1866, P. 4, Wise declares:

9. "we have been the first Israelite^m in this country who had the moral courage to disavow in public print the belief in a coming Messiah and in miracles as doctrines of Judaism, or as arguments in evidence of its truth. We need neither....Truth must triumph without miraculous interference by the Deity...."

See Reminiscences (P. 149) for Raphall - Poznanski controversy, and Wise's public rejection of the Messiah.

For further arguments against a Messiah on Scriptural and other grounds, see Vol. 6, No. 4, July 29, 1859, P. 28. Wise repeats that "no passage of Scripture says that a Messiah will redeem us!"

He also makes his famous assertion: "wherever political oppression is totally removed, as in the United States, the Messiah has come, and so he will come to all nations. Washington was no less a Messiah than Cyrus". Considerable comment followed this statement. In the Israelite of August 26, No. 8, P. 60, Wise therefore defends his view by "showing" that Isaiah was pleased with Cyrus, and that he had a perfect right to be as satisfied with the Messiahship of Washington as Isaiah did with Cyrus. Concluding, Wise calls attention to the fact, that "three distinct prophecies are blended into one to bring out the peculiar Messiah of Christians ^{and} the so-called orthodox Jews. The three prophecies are :

1. The restoration of the Davidian Dynasty.
2. The restoration of Israel to Palestine.
3. The final triumph of truth, justice and liberty.

"These three prophecies have not the least connection in the Bible and should not be blended together. Let them understand this, and they will have another idea of the Messiah doctrine".

Also see Vol. 7, PP. 235-36, where Wise states that "every

9. period is to have a prophet, who shall teach the people the development and progress of the sacred word consonantly with the just and reasonable demands of the time.... These words are the very first source of the Messiah idea. God will cause prophets to arise for every time and generation...."

In Vol. 13, No. 34, March 1, 1867, Wise discusses "Messianic Prospects". The point is made that "the millenium...will not be brought about by one person".

10. Ibid, Vol. 8, P. 268

11. Ibid, Vol. 6, No. 3, July 22, 1859, P. 20

Also see Vol. 14, No. 8, August 23, 1867, P. 4 on Messiah and Royalty

12. Ibid, Vol. 8, No. 17, Oct. 25, 1861, P. 132

13. Ibid, Vol. 10, No. 22, Nov. 27, 1863, P. 172

14. Ibid, Vol. 6, August 12, 1859, P. 44

15. Ibid, Vol. 3, No. 23, Dec. 12, 1856, P. 182

16. Ibid, Vol. 5, No. 43, April 29, 1859, P. 340

17. Ibid, Vol. 14, P. 107

18. Occident, Vol. 7, P. 244

19. Ibid, P. 239

See Occident, Vol. 7, July 1849, No. 4, P. 186

Also Deut. 28-30 for Scriptural support.

20. Israelite, Vol. 5, No. 7, August 20, 1858, P. 52
21. Ibid, No. 41, P. 324
22. Inid, No. 46, May 24, 1867, P. 4
23. Ibid, Vol. 13, No. 46, P. 4
24. Ibid, Vol. 5, Jan. 28, 1859, P. 236
25. Ibid, Vol. 14, August 23, 1867, No. 8, P. 14
26. Occident, Vol. 7, No. 4, July 1849, P. 184

See Philipson and Gross, P. 400-406. We quote from a letter (P. 405) to a "Gentleman Who With His Family Wishes to Embrace Judaism": "There is but one truth and this was revealed to Israel; therefore Israel is the mountain of the Lord which all nations must finally ascend, there to learn of God's ways and to walk in His paths. As God revealed His nature and will to Israel, so He shall be called the nameless great first cause of all, Jehovah, blessed forever be His glorious name. Whenever the nations will know God in truth and light, whenever they will also know that they learned Him from Israel, and they shall ^{call} him Jehovah, as we claim Him, not Allah, not Jupiter, not Jesus, not Messiah, but Jehovah, the God of all... then 'His name will be one'. The knowledge and fear of God will invite all men to know and observe His laws; this is redemption, there is the fountain-head of salvation. This is our Messiah for whom we wait".

27. Israelite, Vol. 5, No. 2, July 16, 1858, P. 13

28. Ibid, Vol. 7, P. 185

29. Ibid, Vol. 14, No. 19, P. 4

30. Ibid, No. 22, Dec. 6, 1867, P. 4

See also Vol. 12, No. 24, Dec. 15, 1865, P. 188

31. Ibid, Vol. 4, No. 15, Oct. 16, 1857, P. 116

32. Ibid, Vol. 5, P. 13

33. Ibid, Vol. 6, No. 36, March 9, 1860, P. 284

34. Reminiscences, P. 313 - 14

See Vol. 2, Israelite, No. 24, Dec. 21, 1855, P. 196,

for Wise's defense of the Cleveland Conference. His editorial is entitled "He is a Traitor".

35. Israelite, Vol. 2, P. 172

In the Occident, Vol. 7, No. 4, July 1849, P. 188,

Wise sets forth the thesis that "Only fundamental truths, the principal doctrines, the abstract truths, concerning God and His attributes, concerning man, his duties and hopes, shall become the property of all nations on earth". On P. 189 he declares: "but the ceremonial part of our faith is the exclusive property of Israel; it has never been given unto us to teach it to other nations; but partly to separate our forefathers from paganism, from the altar of idols, which they saw adored in Egypt, and in all the countries round about them; partly to prevent us from being divided and subdivided

35 into an innumerable amount of sects; and partly to stamp us with the signs and tokens of our faith, and of our nationality, that we, if scattered, may remain all over the earth one and the same nation, designed for one destiny; that we may not be swallowed up by the overwhelming multitude of other nations, before all the world shall have accepted our sacred message, until all nations adore with us the one and true God - until our mission is fulfilled".

36. Israelite, Vol. 2, No. 22, Dec. 7, 1855, P. 180
37. Ibid, No. 24, Dec. 14, 1855, P. 188
38. Ibid, Vol. 5, No. 10, Sept. 10, 1858. P. 78
39. Ibid, Vol. 8, No. 50, June 13, 1862, P. 396
40. Ibid, Vol. 13, No. 9, August 31, 1866, P. 5
41. Ibid, Vol. 14, No. 26, Jan. 3, 1868, P. 4
42. Occident, Vol. 7, No. 4, July 1849, P. 189
43. Israelite, Vol. 4, July 24, 1857, P. 20
44. Ibid, P. 21
45. Ibid, No. 4, July 31, 1857, P. 28
46. Ibid, Vol. 5, No. 15, Oct. 15, 1858, P. 116
47. Ibid, Vol. 3, No. 35, March 6, 1857, P. 275
48. Reminiscences, P. 50
49. Israelite, Vol. 10, No. 22, Nov. 27, 1863, P. 172
50. Vol. 9, Nov. 21, 1862, P. 156

51. Minhag America, Wise, P. 11
52. Ibid, P. 13
53. Ibid, P. 45
54. Ibid, P. 47. Also see P. 16
55. Ibid, P. 114
56. Ibid, P. 184
57. Ibid, P. 246
58. C.C.A.R. Yearbook, Vol. 29, P. 201
59. Israelite, Vol. 13, No. 30, April 5, 1867, P. 4

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