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THEOLOGICAL DEP'TMENT.

ISAAC M. WISE, EDITOR.

CINCINNATI:

Friday Morning.....June 16, 1865.

☞ PREMIUM. ☜

To the Subscribers of the Israelite.

A fine lithograph, 13 by 17 inches, being a true likeness of our senior Editor, the Rev. Dr. I. M. WISE, will be forwarded, free of postage, to all our subscribers who will send us the amount of subscription for the ensuing volume of the *Israelite*, beginning with the first number in July, 1865, and closing with the last number published in June, 1866, previous to August 1, 1865.

BLOCH & CO.,
tf Publishers and Proprietors.

THE BIBLE

Reviewed for Reflecting Readers. By GUSTAV ADOLF WISLICENUS. Vol. II—The New Testament. Translated expressly for the *Israelite*.

This work, which contains the results of modern criticism almost up to date, and is as yet entirely unknown to the English reading community, will completely appear in our columns from week to week, until finished. We invite impartial critics not to neglect the reading thereof. It is a work highly interesting and thorough, more so than Renan's Life of Jesus.

THE MEANS TO AN AMERICAN SYNAGOGUE.

All our synagogal reforms are worthless, if we succeed not in *Americanizing* the Hebrew institutions. Judaism must not be a foreign plant on this soil; it must not be German, French, Polish or English; it must be American in form, principle and spirit. The Ghetto spots must be eradicated, the reminiscenses of persecution and hatred, the spirit of royalty, exclusiveness and narrowness must be destroyed, radically exterminated; all that is dead must be buried, whatever is superannuated must be laid aside, and a form thoroughly American must be adopted. So only Judaism has a future in this land of the free.

Let none be persuaded by the declamations of our good-old-times folks, that the so-called orthodox form has vitality or the hope of a future; it is not true, people do no longer believe in rabbinical authority to make religion for them; they lay no *Tefillin*, wear no *Tsitsith* and no long beards and locks, fast not on the four national fastdays, shave as they please and when they please, and are not very scrupulous in their dietary laws. It is in vain, that form of Judaism exists no more, people left the Ghetto and thirst after freedom, in religion no less than in politics. The rabbis of old found it necessary to set religion first and most prominent, and all the activities and inclinations of man under it, so that the man was altogether engulfed in the Jew, and all affairs of life had to model after his religious ideas. It is true, so Judaism was preserved during the ages of darkness and persecution, so it was protected against the corrupting influences of heathen and scholastic matter, which could only stick to the crust; but it is equally true that now liberty and understanding stand much higher than tradition and authority, most people are ignorant of the latter and are led by the former. It is no less true that the ascetic practices of other days look as ridiculous to the modern Israelites as the doings of the Flagelants appear to the modern Christian—and doctrines based on uninquired faith, precepts inimical to the understanding, fare no better with the modern Israelite than with the modern Christian. Well, then, the fact is, that the so-called orthodox form of Judaism exists no more, notwithstanding the petty exertions of the synagogal orthodoxy, whose sole religion is in a prayer-book.

It is quite natural that the citizen of a free country can not think and feel like the unhappy man excluded from society, kept in the Ghetto, under the iron grasp of despotism, whose religious forms was all he had in the world of the mind. It is quite natural that the disciple of modern science, philosophy and criticism should widely differ from people of other days in matters of abstract speculation. Things have changed. Renan is the hero of the day in the republic of letters, and Napoleon himself, together with the Pope and his priests, can not stop him. The Queen of England pronounces Colenso Bishop of Natal, notwithstanding his heresies. Times have changed, and the forms of Judaism are the product of time.

Let none be alarmed by the repeated lamentations of our good-old-times folks at the decline of Judaism. It never stood higher, and was never better appreciated than just now. That which they call Judaism declines the empty benches in their synagogues; the indifference and luke-warmness of which they complain prove it sufficiently. But that is not Judaism: Judaism as a religion, with its sublime doctrines of the most spiritual monotheism, with its God of reason, power, justice and love, with its complete and insurpassable code of ethics, with all the germs of philosophy at its basis, three thousand years of history to back it, common sense and the philosophical understanding to support it; Judaism, with its freedom and reason in heaven and on earth, in time and eternity, its humane appreciation of man's virtue, duty, hope and excellency, its emphatic proclamation of universal redemption, justice and freedom; yes, this Judaism *itself* is better appreciated now than ever, and sees its universal triumph approach. The heart of the Israelite is no less in his religion now than in days of yore, and the millions of Gentiles who believe with us are our proselites, although they object to the name.

The difficulty under which we labor is, that the universal spirit of Judaism, according to the notions of our conservatives, must be retained imprisoned in a particular form, a form altogether estranged to the American Israelite, much more so to the Gentile. We do not counsel anybody to break asunder that form, because it is broken; we say remove the fragments and give us an American form, one fully corresponding to the mental and political freedom of the age and country in which we live. Let us, for God's sake, give full satisfaction to the demands of the rising generation, and prepare the future for our religion on this continent.

How shall it be done, the whole generation born or raised under the genial sun of freedom, asks, when we have no leaders, no advisers, and we are no theologians? Judaism requires no priests. Let your piety, your attachment to the religion of your fathers be your leader; let the Bible be your adviser. Go to work as you do in your clubs. Organize into religious bodies. Hold meetings for divine worship and instruction, as you generally do for mutual improvement. If you have one among you who is conversant with the Hebrew, let him read portions of the Bible and of the American prayer book in that language; if you have none, lay it aside for the time being, and conduct both service and instruction in the vernacular of the country. Study music, there are plenty of music teachers in the country—to form your own choir. Select the best psalms and hymns in the English language; there are plenty without a particular christian character. If the orthodox say, you sing psalms and hymns used in the churches; tell them, it is no fault of yours that the whole civilized world took its devotional poetry from the Hebrew literature. Mr. Addison could never have written his beautiful hymn "The spacious firmament on high," if David had not given us the nineteenth Psalm. Tell them, that we are not bound to reject our own property, because others turn it to their purposes, as little as God destroys the heavenly luminaries, because Heathens worship them.—Tell them, we want psalms and hymns sung also in other churches, provided they express our own doctrines, in order to make our place of worship to what the prophet calls it, "The house of prayer to all nations," that no religious man be a stranger among us. In this way it is easy to collect sufficient material for a divine service.

Let all prayers be spontaneous, offered up by this or that member who feels like praying, and if none feel like it, pray not.

Jacob had no set of prayers; still he prayed on awaking from that sublime dream he prayed when danger approached. Moses had no set of prayers; still he prayed for Israel and also for his sister. None of the Prophets or Psalmists of Israel had a prayer-book, or knew of *reading* their prayers at stated times; still they prayed, so beautifully, indeed, that most all civilized men pray in their words.

The same can be done in regard to preaching. Let this or that member read or speak a sermon, as good as he can do it You deliver now lectures on different subjects in your clubs, why should not you just as well be capable of delivering a sermon? The Bible is open to every-body. You read French and German, and might pick the finest gems of Judaism from writers as excellent in this branch as Shakespeare, Isaac Newton or Humboldt in theirs. You will always find members enough who from time to time will write a sermon, so that you have one at each meeting. If there is none, have debates on religious topics; there can be no difference before God, whether one or more speak of His will. You debate on a thousand subjects in your clubs, debate on points of religion in your religious clubs. Read a chapter of the Bible, and let questions be proposed and answers given as the moment suggest.

So American congregations can be started and developed who, in a short time, will call forth among themselves sufficient talent for the ministry, and have sufficient experience to know exactly, what they want and how they want it. These congregations, by and by, can unite to one harmonious body, (what German, Polish, French and English Jews, reformer and orthodox, Bavarian reformers and Bohemian reformers, Polish orthodox and Elsacian orthodox can hardly do) establish uniformity in public worship, establish a college for the education of the ministry; in short, establish an American synagogue, the American form of Judaism naturally developed. This will *Americanize* Judaism and secure to it a prosperous future on this continent.

Let the young and enthusiastic ones who love God and Israel take this matter into serious consideration, and let us hear of them. Our heart is with them. We will assist, prompt, co-operate, as much as we can. "What criest thou to me, speak to the children of Israel, that they sojourn." Go on with the blessings of the Lord.

☞ No man probably has done more for the improvement of method in teaching languages than Dr. Ollendorf who, but lately died at Paris, as professor of the German at the "Academy." This man, say the *Archieves* was an Israelite who died faithful to God and his people. It is strange, (whatever the Cincinnati *Volksblatt* might say) that a Jew must head almost all steps of progress. That paper too, will have to go its old beaten path, till a Jew rises to give it a lift and astonish the world.

SERMON BY THE REV. DR. MAX LILIENTHAL, AT THE BROADWAY SYNAGOGUE.

The Proclamation of the President of the United States, ordering us to convene in our houses of divine worship, and to mourn for the untimely loss of our lamented martyr President, Abraham Lincoln, comes too late. Tears and mourning, sorrow and grief, can not be commanded. They are the genuine and spontaneous expressions of feelings wrung from the heart of men. They are the almost involuntary tribute we pay to the saddening events of life. They are the simple language of nature, under a generous and simultaneous impulse of any government.

Mourn for Lincoln! Honor the illustrious dead! Was there an order needed? Since history began to record the deeds and sentiments of men, there never was a man mourned and lamented for—never a deceased man honored, as Lincoln was! Our President in life, he has become, by death, the President, in a sort, of the United States of the civilized world. If plain and unpretending Lincoln, said even the London Times, had been the imperial representative and heir of all the emperors and kings that had ruled the world for a thousand years, and had been as conspicuous for his illustrious birth and unquestionable power as for his virtues and goodness, his cruel and untimely death could not have been mourned with more deep-rooted and spontaneous affection. Calumny and prejudice had died with him, and the civilized world, forming one grand chorus, united in singing his praise and wailing his loss. What more could we wish him; what more could we do? The nation mourned for a father; the world for a benefactor and common friend. Greater reward can not be bestowed upon any mortal man. It is the highest tribute possible to be paid to any man's memory.

Therefore, I said the proclamation comes too late. But President Johnson is aware of these facts, as well as we are; and yet, if he has ordained this day of prayer and commemoration, he has done it with the noble and ennobling intent that the calmed and repossessed mind of the nation once more may look back on the life of the departed martyr; that once more they may be profited by his illustrious example; that once more they may swear allegiance to the sacred principles he has sealed with his blood; that once more they may resolve upon handing them down to posterity untarnished and unimpared. Viewed in this light, the proclamation is a timely and proper one. For we have to honor Lincoln's memory, not only today, but for all time to come; verifying the words, of the wise king: "The memory of the just will prove a blessing for evermore."

"Republics are ungrateful," is an old historical adage. With the honor of the office they bestow on any citizen, they are wont to believe they have canceled all their debts for services, past and future, as well as for eminence of character and talent. And if any man overcomes this proverbial ingratitude; if, year after year, he becomes more endeared to the hearts of his countrymen; if they cherish his name, and revere and idolize his memory—there must be in such a man some peculiar feature; in his public career something peculiar characteristic, that compels the nation to make an exception in his favor, and render an unwonted homage to his name and fame.

Lincoln was one of these uncommon men. The longer he was in office, the more we learned to respect him. The more we got acquainted with his homespun virtues the more he won our affections. We do not get weary of speaking of his life, and his calamitous end. Like sons bereft of a beloved and revered father, find comfort in repeating, again and again, his words and his paternal counsels, thus the nation never gets tired of dwelling on him and his life. Lincoln's name has become a household-piece in every family; it has become a domestic altar, around which the nation meets with filial affection. No President, not even the father of our country, our immortal Washington, has taken so deep-rooted hold of the nations sympathy, as plain and unassuming Lincoln did.

And what is the cause of this unusual gratitude and love? That none of our public men were so thoroughly identified with the people as he was. He was emphatically one of the people: feeling as they felt, thinking as they think, speaking as they speak; looking upon matters from their point of view. There was a homeliness and simplicity about him, a quaint humor, a genial nature and a sterling rectitude of character, peculiarly adapted, to win for him the sympathy and regard of the great masses of mankind.

Yes, he was emphatically one of the people. Republics have their aristocracies too. There is the aristocracy of inherited or self-won wealth; the aristocracy of privileged education, and special training; there is the social aristocracy of fashionable and high-toned life. The masses stand aloof and separated from the company of those selected circles. And there was nothing in Lincoln, associating with these classes. He earned in early youth his living by dire manual labor. He had to struggle for the scanty knowledge of more reading and writing. He had to rely on his own untiring exertions for the requisition of more profound studies. Living out in the far West, he was excluded and saved from the hypocritical polish of fashionable manners. He preserved, in their natural purity, the customs and simplicity of the people. Thus he remained one of them during the whole of his public career. In his presence they did not feel themselves humbled, as in the presence of stately Washington, of grand-minded Webster, or eagle-eyed Clay—they felt at home with him, like in the house of one of their farming neighbors, and his loss was felt by them, as if one of their most intimate friends had been stricken down.

The great masses of mankind are kind and good hearted. Uncouth as their manners may be; rough as the outbursts of their feelings now and then may appear, there is at the bottom of their nature a fountain-well of kindness, that on every occasion gushes and rushes forth with blessing, might and power. And wherever they meet with the same genuine virtue in their fellow-men, their lively sympathy is enlisted. And here again, Lincoln was the truest representative of the great masses. His heart was his title to nature's nobility, his indisputable right to mankind's love. "Love your fellow-men as yourself," was with him not the unreachable ideal of religion, but the North star principle of his life. To forgive, to encourage, to make happy, was the steady, practical impulse of his heart. He did not temper justice with mercy; no, mercy reigned with him supreme and alone. How characteristic of his temper are his words, when having listened to the entreaties of a soldier's wife, whose husband, a deserter, sentenced to be shot, and having granted the requested pardon, he turned to a friend and said: "I may have done wrong, but I have made that poor woman happy" Such deeds found their echo among the masses; such words enshrined him, as one of them into their hearts. Neither the power of his office, nor the loftiness of his position, could ice or chill his heart. It beat with