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Series D: Education and Rabbinic Career, 1930-1993.

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Wise, Stephen S. 70th birthday. March 1944.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the
American Jewish Archives website.

Temple Emanuel

PRESENTS

A Survey OF THREE CLASSICAL PERIODS IN JEWISH LITERATURE

Three Consecutive Lectures

By

RABBI HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN

Friday Evenings, at 8 o'Clock

Temple Emanuel

Denver



*Members, Their Families and Friends
Are Cordially Invited*



Series begins Friday Evening

March 17, 1944,

Seventieth Birthday of

RABBI STEPHEN S. WISE

Friday, March 17th:

***Prophets*-Teachers of Political and Economic Philosophy**

1. *What Is a Prophet?*

Not a fortune teller, but an interpreter of trends, a commentator.

2. *What Was the Function of the Prophet?*

To preach a social message; to teach the ethics of politics and economics.

3. *Major and Minor Prophets:*

Three Major—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel.

Twelve Minor—Including Amos, Hosea, Micah.

4. *Development of Prophetic Judaism:*

Influence of Prophets on Reform.

5. *Twentieth Century Prophet:*

Stephen S. Wise

Friday, March 24th:

***Talmud*-Source of Legal Judaism**

1. *What Is the Talmud?*

An encyclopedia covering every aspect of Jewish life, consisting of two parts:

Mishna—Book of Laws

Gemara—Commentary on Laws } = Talmud

2. *What Does the Talmud Contain?*

Laws, opinions, court minutes, academic discussions of several generations of great Rabbis, grouped under six main categories:

a. Seeds—(Agriculture)

b. Festivals—(Holidays)

c. Women

d. Damages—Civil and Criminal Law

e. Holy Things

f. Clean Things—Dietary Laws, etc.

3. *How, Where and When Was Talmud Written?*

In Babylonia, during the approximate period of the 2nd - 5th centuries, C. E.

A second Talmud compiled in Palestine during the same period.

4. *Development of Talmud in Later Periods.*

Arba Turim—Four Towers

Shulchan Aruch—Prepared Table

Friday, March 31st:

Siddur—Prayer Book

1. *What Does the Prayer Book Contain?*

Jewish Theology—Definitions of God

Jewish Philosophy—Love of Life

Jewish Nationalism—Shmoneh Esreh
(Eighteen Benedictions)

Jewish Poetry—Psalms and Piyuttim
(Medieval Poems)

2. *Is There Only One Prayer Book?*

No.—There have been many prayer books issued by Rabbis at different periods and places.

3. *Are They Altogether Different in Contents?*

No.—Some individual prayers might vary, but there is a basic framework which is unchanging. Analysis of traditional Sabbath morning service for sake of comparison.

4. *How Does the Union Prayer Book Compare?*

Analysis of Sabbath morning service in Union Prayer Book.

Intermountain Jewish News

March 13, 1944.

Friday, March 17, is the seventieth birthday of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. All over the land celebrations will be held in his honor. At Temple Emanuel, on this Friday evening, there will be inaugurated a special series of three lectures dedicated to Dr. Wise. The first of the series is on the "Prophets", and in this lecture the nature of prophecy and the prophet will be discussed, according to the following outline:

What is a Prophet?

What was the Function of the Prophet?

Major and Minor Prophets.

Prophetic Influence on the Development of Reform Judaism.

Twentieth-Century Prophet: Stephen S. Wise

The other two lectures in the series will be based on the Talmud and the Siddur, and they will be offered on the next two consecutive Friday evenings. The whole will comprise a survey course in great classics of our literature, and is being offered so that the American Jew may become more familiar with his heritage.

On Saturday morning, regular Sabbath services will be held at 11:15 A.M., Rabbi Friedman will preach on the subject, "Cleansing Oneself". This sermon is based on the portion of the week, part of which is from Numbers 19:1-22, which deals with the Red Heifer and ritual purification. This Sabbath is called Shabbat Parah, and represents part of the preliminary purification for the observance of Passover.

At the Soldier Service, Sunday morning, March 19, at 11:30 A.M., the sermon will be delivered by Rabbi Manuel Laderman of the Hebrew Educational Alliance. His subject will be "Love of God and Love of Country". Following the service, all men and women in uniform and their guests are invited to partake of the luncheon and entertainment offered weekly at the Canteen sponsored by the Sisterhood of Temple Emanuel.

March 14, 1944

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What is a Prophet?
What was the Function of the Prophet?
Major and Minor Prophets.
Prophetic Influence on the Development of Reform Judaism
Twentieth-Century Prophet: Stephen S. Wise.

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Stephen S. Wise is today seventy years old, and fifty of those years have been spent serving his people as rabbi, pastor, organizer and public representative. Because of the unique genius which is his, and because of the completely unselfish manner in which he has placed his ability at the feet of his people, Dr. Wise has become the outstanding Jew of this century.

His accomplishments are known to all. His public life is an open book, perused by the Jewry of America and Europe, as he has moved across states and countries urging, pleading, orating, inspiring Jew and non-Jew alike. He is the founder of the American Jewish Congress, whose program it is to fight for Jewish rights, and in this sense he deserves the title "Defender of the Faith." He is one of the founders of the Zionist Organization of America, and as its many-time president, has served well the cause of our European brethren who have found a haven and a spiritual refuge in Palestine. Together with Henry Monsky, of B'nai B'rith, he was instrumental in the calling together of that historic conclave in New York last summer, the American Jewish Conference, to which delegates were sent from every community in the land.

In fact, so multiple have been his contributions to Jewish organizational life in this country, that he stands almost like Moses, high on a peak overlooking his people, surveying the results of his handiwork. And to Moses he has often been compared. Rabbi William Kramer of Pittsfield, Massachusetts, quotes this story which Dr. Wise tells about himself: "Recently I had a letter from a gentleman in Philadelphia who suggested that I 'strike a death blow to our enemies.' The concluding line of his letter was - 'Moses did it; why can't you?' Dr. Wise, perfect master of the English language says that he replied to this man: 'I can't because I ain't Moses.'" This is the typical modesty of the man who has repeated again and

and again: "The humblest Jew in a Polish ghetto, if any be humble in that heroic position of martyrdom, is my brother and commands my love."

But elaboration on his public career is unnecessary, since this is a story for all to read. I would tell rather some of the more personal and human aspects of his great personality, as it was my privilege to observe them during my years of study at the Jewish Institute of Religion.

Twenty-two years ago Dr. Wise founded this school, which will be an eternal tribute to his memory. It was established in New York because he felt the lack (in this teeming center of Jewish life,) of a seminary dedicated to the training of liberal rabbis. And it was built up on the principle of K'lal Yisroel, Universal Israel, rising above the narrow partisanship of bickering groups. Here men would be trained to respect and understand all interpretations of Judaism, be these Reform, Conservative or Orthodox. Here professors would be brought together representing all opinions, able to respect the differences of the students, and able to contribute to the development of this basic concept of Jewish unity.

Many were the critics and the pessimists who said this could never be achieved. Many were the skeptics - yet now after twenty-two years, during all of which time Dr. Wise has been the president and guiding spirit, The Jewish Institute of Religion stands firm and justified. It has graduated perhaps one hundred and fifty rabbis. Fully half of these are serving in conservative congregations, and a few even in orthodox pulpits.

As students, these men of differing convictions sat next to each other in the lecture rooms and rubbed shoulders, so that each absorbed from his neighbor something of the other point of view. In Bible class,

half of the students would sit bareheaded while the other half would not read the scripture or take part in the class without first covering their heads. This occurred in every class, every day - and it was amazing how quickly Reform and Conservative students learned to respect each other. In Talmud class, the orthodox boys would rush to the assistance of their reform colleagues who did not have sufficient background to handle this difficult subject - while in the sermon-preaching class, the Harvard-educated students would help the parochial-college students find a more perfectly-polished phrase. It was a wonderful mutuality - practiced in the Institute - continued when Institute men went out into the active rabbinate all over the country, and found themselves able to get along with their colleagues of differing opinions whom they met in the communities to which they went. To Dr. Wise should go the respect of every Jew in America for founding a school based on such broad principles, and to Dr. Henry Slonimsky, Professor of Ethics and Religion for nineteen years, goes the credit for being the inspiring Dean of the Institute, whom Dr. Wise has many times called "my right hand and support."

Dr. Wise himself teaches two classes each week. One, held on Thursday morning, is called "Problems of the Ministry," in the official catalogue, but has been nicknamed by the student "Shmoos Session of the Chief." The class is held in a very large room in the midst of which is a huge oval table. All the men in the school, about forty altogether, find places around this table - and wait for the Chief. Every second week he brings with him a special treat - a box of cigars under his arm, which he slides across the table and offers to his "boys". He always prefaces this distribution of this friendly little gift with the same remark. He says: "Boys, this is the best five-cent cigar I could buy. If I were earning as much as some of you will make when you become famous, in later years, then I could afford a ten-cent brand -but

I can't do it, I can't do it."

Dr. Wise himself does not smoke, but he apparently does not mind a smoke-filled room, and after the electric lights have been turned off (because his eyes cannot stand the direct glare), he settles down in his high-backed chair, the men relax comfortably and light their cigars, and he starts talking.

His words flow magically, entrancing the listeners, and as the story unfolds - be it an account of some European tragedy about which he has been informed by some Congress associates posted overseas; or be it a description of his most recent conference with the President; or be it a recitation of some internal Jewish organizational problem - as he talks, notes and cables and memoranda emerge from his capacious inner pocket, and we are all transplanted to the scene of whatever action he is describing. After several years of attending this Thursday class, every student comes to have a sense of world Jewish problems, brought to him graphically and first-hand by this man who has consorted with kings and presidents, prime ministers and colonial officers, and who wears in his lapel a button signifying that he is a Chevalier of the French Legion of Honor, the highest award which France ever grants.

Dr. Wise conducts a second class each week, this one on Friday morning, in the little chapel on the fourth floor of the Institute. Here, one of the senior students preaches a practice sermon, perhaps one which he intends to use that very same evening in some synagogue, and when he is finished, his effort is criticized by the professor of speech and by Dr. Wise himself.

There is no ordeal more terrifying. Preaching before a crowded Temple of two thousand worshippers on the High Holy Days is less nerve-wracking than preaching before Dr. Wise and thirty or forty of

one's fellow-students on any ordinary Friday morning. After the sermon is over, and it is usually short, because there is a favorite saying of Dr. Slonimsky that "if you can't save a man's soul in twenty minutes, you won't do it in forty, so you might as well only preach twenty" - after his sermon, the poor shivering student sits and waits for the blows to fall.

The speech professor has the first crack - and by the time he is through telling you about your pronounciation and enunciation and aspiration and posture and grammar and lifeless imagery - you are ready to leave the rabbinate and become a carpenter.

But that is just a foretaste. Dr. Wise then takes the stand and begins in a very gentle and sarcastic manner to point out that there is only one way to speak correctly and that is, first of all, to speak correctly and that is, first of all, to speak English - and not some queer dialect from the south or New England or Brooklyn. "English" he shouts, "English boys, requires proper grammer and clear phrases, not the usage of long and learned words which no one understands, usually not even yourselves. Speak so the people will know what you mean - not so that you sound like a walking dictionary."

And with this warm-p, the man with one of the greatest voices in America, proceeds to thunder at the poor little student-preacher, "Don't become so infatuated with the sound of your own voice, that you become carried away by your own oratory. Don't become hypnotized by the mellowness of your vocal vibrations - and above all, don't try to imitate me." If the luckless student happens to have a nice rich voice, Dr. Wise will be even harsher with him, and tell him that a good voice is a curse, because it causes a man to become foppish and more concerned with the exterior form of his sermon than with the internal content. "A good voice is a very poor substitue for lack of brain power" he has hurled at many an aspiring rabbi.

Then, having finished with the English and with the voice, he proceeds to take apart the content of the sermon. "Never, never be trite or commonplace or banal" is one of the more frequent rebukes. The theme of the sermon, its organization, its development and its conclusion are all attacked and when the hour is over, our student sits limply and alone, receiving the condolences of his class-mates.

This is Dr. Wise, as he is observed in close relationship during the academic year. Warm and vibrant, friendly and personal with all his "boys", he is a source of inspiration and a fountain of strength to all who know him and work with him. May the years ahead be good to him and bring him rest and joy so that he may continue his life of service to the people of Israel.

