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Homeless! The tragedy of Heinrich Heine, 1956.

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## HOMELESS ! THE TRAGEDY OF HEINRICH HEINE

On the occasion of the Hundredth Anniversary of the death of the foremost lyric poet of Germany

# March 4, 1956

The world, dear friends, is commemorating at this time, the 100th Anniversary of the death of Heinrich Heine, the greatest lyric poet of Germany and one of the immortal singers of all time. You have probably been reading in the public press that the Gity of Dusseldorf, the birthplace of Heine, sponsored a memorial meeting to commemorate the centennial of the Poet's death and as part of the National observance West German government issued a Ten-Pfennig Postage Stamp and memorial meetings and readings from Heine's works were held in various German cities. In Dusseldorf it was announced that the City has purchased, for \$50,000.00, a collection of some thirty-seven hundred manuscripts of Heine. It is all very interesting, what the Gity of Germany and the City of Dusseldorf are doing now in honor of Heine. It may be recalled that in 1897, on the occasion of Heine's 100th Anniversary of his birth (Heine was born in 1797) this same City of Dusseldorf, where he was born, refused to accept a memorial statue to Heine. And this Statue finally found its resting place in the Grand Concourse in the Bronx in the City of New York. You will recall also that the Nazis ordered all the books of Heine to be burned and his poems excluded from all anthologies of German poetry and where they couldn't exclude some of his poems because they were too popular, like the "Lorelei", they included the poem, but they said that the author was unknown. As far back as 1835, during the very lifetime of Heine, his books were banned in the German Confederation by the Bundesrat because they were found to be too revolutionary. One is not at all sure, therefore, on reading these newspaper dispatches about the honor which is at the moment being paid to Heine; that this ebb and flow in posthumous fortunes of this poet in his homeland has actually come to an end and that Heine is finally

and for all time and permanently been adopted by his fatherland. He may be rejected and cast out again. The popularity of Heine in Germany may be looked upon in a way as a true barometer of the intellectual pressures and political pressures in Germany. I am persuaded that the permanent and the secure home for Heine is not in Germany but in the hearts of free men everywhere; those who love beauty and great art; those who admire men who battle for the freedom of their fellowmen against all forms of tyranny -- that's the home - the permanent home of Heine.

As regards the quality and the appeal of his poetry - more than fifty years ago, an author writing in the Edinburgh Review in England (in Scotland) wrote as follows:

"From generation to generation his songs have touched countless hearts, have brought to the simple and to the wise, to the sad as to the happy, to youth with its onlooking eyes of eagerness and hope, to age with its backward gaze and spring-green memories, the greatest gifts art can bring: a sense of quickened emotion, a sense of a keener recognition of the pulses of tenderness and passion that beat under the gross material semblances of men's prosaic life-days. . . His songs are one long cry of distress, broken with anger, vibrating with mockery; they are threaded with a hopelessness that takes refuge in levity and a passion, which, as if ashamed of its barren impotence, puts on the ribald cap and bells of the professed with and licensed humorist."

I think this is rather a fair summary of the quality of Heine's poetic art and the reason for its perennial appeal to men of all ages and of all times, and all moods of human life. And Heine's vogue has continued, unlessened and undimmed, through all these intervening years.

Heine was a liberal in the truest sense of the word. He was a courageous champion of the principles of the French Revolution, which in his early youth were still very fresh in the world. Principles which the reactionaries in Germany sought to throttle. Heine fought for the emancipation of the human spirit. He believed in human progress and in democracy. He was intolerant of all false pride and privilege. He was scornful of all those who would keep the human intellect and

-2-

the human spirit in chains. He was the poet of the new revolutionary age which began with the French Revolution - the age of enlightenment which found its expression in the French Revolution; and of the new vistas which were opening for man in the 19th Century. He was a European and a Cosmopolitan. He was opposed to narrow Nationalism - selfish patriotism and the racialism which was so rampant in his own country of Germany. He was, as he himself said, "A brave soldier in the war for the liberation of mankind", and because of it he was greatly loved and greatly hated. He was hated more particularly - the hatred towards him was heightened by the characteristic bitter satire and mockery of which he was such a master. Heine was not always temperate in his judgments and in expressions. Heine was not a calm coherent thinker, a philosopher or a social reformer - he was a tempestuous poet, passionate, headlong -- frequently he embarrassed his friends as well as his enemies. Many Heines struggled for the possession of the pen of Heine. As one writer put it,

"To belong to the past and to the future, to be romanticist and realist, to mingle Mephistopheles with Faust, to be an aristocrat and a revolutionary, to be of a tribe and of a nation, to be a patriot and a cosmopolitan, to be a monotheist through the emotions, a polytheist through the imagination, a pantheist through the intellect, to see Jerusalem through the atmosphere of Hamburg, to sit at the feet of Moses and Aristophanes, to reckon Brother Martin Luther and the Patriarch Voltaire among one's ancestry - all this makes fidelity to one's true self a difficult and intricate affair."

The life of Heine was difficult in the extreme and very difficult and very tragic.

But beneath all these conflicting attitudes, qualities, interests, and linking them all, was a spirit - a beautiful spirit - at once tender, passionate - that loved man and mankind - that revered all that was noble and true — beneath it all was a spirit that was ready to enter the lists and break a lance — and if need be, break his own heart -- in defense of the eternal values of the free human spirit.

There is an old saying 'Poeta-propheta'. A poet is very much like a prophet. a poet, a real poet, can see far ahead and can see far into the heart of things. And because Heine was a great poet he had in many ways the gifts of prophecy. He

-3-

understood, for example the German character far better than most Germans and Europeans of his day, and most Germans and Europeans since his day. And Heine warned the world against the recrudescence of German paganism - of German war lust, at a time when German romanticists were talking only of sweetness and light. He warned the world -- he wrote:

"Christianity -- and this is its noblest merit -- mitigated in a measure that brutal Germanic lust for war; it could not destroy it, however. Should the taming talisman, the corss, shatter some day, there will then burst forth again the ferocity of the old warriors, the insame berserk-rage of which the Nordic poets sing and speak so much. That talisman is decaying and the day will come when it will woefully break down. The old stone gods will then rise from the long-forgotten ruins, and rub the thousand-year-old dust from their eyes, and Thor with the giant sledge-hammer will in the end leap forth and smash the Gothic Cathedrals. \* \* \* A drama will be performed in Germany, against which the French Revolution will appear like a harmless idyl. \* \* \* And the hour will come!"

Those who are rebuilding today the military might of Germany ought to reread the century-old warnings of Heinrich Heine, which came true so tragically, in our own lifetime, but which prophecy still holds true of the future. It is still valid - - it is still ominous.

I referred once or twice to the inner conflict - die Zurisenheit - the rift in the sould of Heine which so baffles his critics and so embittered his own life. This zurisenheit - this divided soul can be traced to his origin; possibly also to the early experiences of his life, a subject which might well intrigue the psychoanalyst. Evidently somewhere along in his early years Heine was terribly hurt and that on his soul remained all through his life. He had bitter experiences - personal his cousins - Solomon Heine, experiences - he was in love with/two cousins in succession -- and his uncle/- and each rejected him in turn. Proud Heine and sensitive Heine never got over it. He loved Germany - and was rejected by Germany. He came from an old world, from a Jewish background which he sought to escape in order to reach out for this glamorous new world that was opening up before him and yet this old world had its tremendous appeal for him. It tugged at his heart-strings. He was a romanticist, a sentamentalist, yet intellectually he was a keen and relentless rationalist. <sup>T</sup>here was a rift clear

2

-4-

down his psyche.

When he was born in 1797 the Middle Ages were still on as far as the Jews of Germany were concerned, and the political and social ghetto walls still isolated him and his fellow Jews from the rest of the world. But at the same time the ideas of the French Revolution were already in the air, and the age of Enlightenment ushered in by the Encyclopedists had already dawned. So that he was the child of two worlds -- one dying and one about to be born.

Jews in Western Europe were tugging desperately at their chains - eager to break out from their ghetto walls and their narrow medieval quarters. They were prepared, many of them, to pay any price for political freedom, social equality and for professional appointment. Most of them were not thinking in terms of the emancipation of the Jews as a group - of all the Jews on the basis of their basic human rights. Each was thinking of his own personal liberation - each man for himself. Some Jews had acquired great wealth and because of their wealth they were able to move in Gentile society. And they thought it was a simple matter for them to seek complete identification with this Gentile world which attracted them so much by abandoning their ancestral faith with which they associated all that was medieval and unpleasant and embarrassing - all the impediments of their lives. They thought it a very simple matter to convert to Christianity and thereby to attain what they hoped to attain - absolute equality. Some of them even rationalized their conduct by maintaining that after all religions differ only in outer forms and forms are not important - at least not important enough to endure discrimination because of them and political and economic disabilities. Historic loyalties did not seem to hold them, nor pride of ancestry, as for example the children of Moses Mendelsohn - that great Jew - that great humanist - who opened so many doors for German Jewry toward a new world, a new day. The children of Moses Mendelsohn all converted to Christianity and their children in turn were raised as Christians in a land which was soon to show them that changing one's religion does not change one's social status or one's political position.

-5-

That whole philosophy is wrong. It is interesting that I came across this thing here quite recently: Moses Mendelsohn's second son was Abraham. And Abraham was the father of a famous musician, Felix Mendelsohn. When Abraham was baptized through no conviction, /he said, but simply as a matter of convenience, he adopted the name of his brother-in-law, Jacob Levine Solomon, who upon his conversion assumed the name of Bartholdy, the name of the original owner of an estate which this Jacob L. Solomon had acquired. So Abraham Mendelsohn, the son of Moses Mendelsohn, now became Abrahm M. Bartholdy. The Mendelsohn name was now contracted to an initial. His son, Felix, the great musician, who had great admiration for his fath grandfather Moses Mendelsohn, and had deep religious convictions which you find expressed in some of his immortal music - Felix insisted in retaining the name of Mendelsohn and a letter has been recently published in which Abraham is father chides his son Felix for using the name Mendelsohn. He urges him to drop it and call himself Felix Bartholdy and to cut himself off completely from any connections with the Jewish people. To that extent these desperate people reaching out for what they believed would be absolute equality and opportunity for themselves - to that extent they went - turning their backs upon their past and are reaching out for these apples of Sodom.

Heine - Heinrich Heine - who was born Chayim (Harry) in an orthodox Jewish home, went to Cheder as a child and learned whatever a Jewish lad learned of the Torah and of Jewish customs and observances, in the Cheder, which he attended until he was Bar Mitzvah. And that is when his formal Jewish education ended. Although it must be said that Heine's interest in Jewish culture continued for many years thereafter.When he went to Berlin he joined an interesting organization which was at that time established by some eminent Jewish Scholars "Verein fur Kultur und Wissenschaft des Juden" and organization for culture and scientific study of the Jewish people and of Judaism to which organization such scholars of Leopold Zunz, Edward Gans and Ludwig Marcus, belonged. And in contact with these people and in Heine the study and research involved in belonging to such an organization/deepened

-6-

his knowledge of Jews and Judaism. He decided to study Law but he could not obtain his Law Degree as long as he remained a Jew. So in June 1825 he had himself baptized into a the Lutheran Confession and in July of that year he received his degree from the University of Gottingen. He needed that law degree because he wanted to qualify and teach in the University as a professor and to that end he had himself baptized, but he never got that position.

About his own baptism Heine wrote to his lifelong friend Moses Moser, the following:

"If the law has permitted the stealing of silver spoons, I should never have become baptized. From my way of thinking you can see that baptism doesn't really matter much to me ... It only would make me dedicate myself all the more to the struggle for the rights of my Jewish brethren. Still I hold it as a disgrace and a stain upon my honor, but in order to obtain an office in Prussia - in beloved Prussia - I should allow myself to be baptized."

Well one does not dedicate himself to the struggle for the rights of his Jewish brothers by baptism - by abandoing his faith. Other Jews in Germany, like the great Gabriel Riesser, who really dedicated themselves to fight for the rights of their fellow Jews in Germany, did not sell their birthright. They continued to fight, as Jews, for Jews, with far greater success than Heine did. Gabriel Riesser, without abandoning his faith, after many years of hard struggle, succeeded in becoming a Judge of the Supreme Court of Hamburg, the first Jewish Judge in Germany.

Heine admired the great spiritual achievements of the Jewish people, but he had no strong committments to them. He was, as someone put it, "a bird escaped from the cage of the ghetto — flying in every direction to test his liberty" but he was afraid to alight permanently anywhere. He had no strong committments. He had no home - no permanent home - in his people, in his faith, anywhere.

He wrote with great sympathy and understanding on Jewish themes, "Hebrew Melodies" - "Romanzero" with its beautiful portrayal of the poet -"Prinzessin Sabbat"- that unfinished work"Rabbi von Bacherach" an historical

romance of the Middle Ages dealing with the persecution of the Jews by the Crusaders.

-7-

He could write with great sympathy and understanding and love about his people and his people's history, but there was always gall in his cup of admiration, rancor, him mockery and irreverance. As one reads/one feels that somehow this poor man is flagellating himself all the time, while he is railing against his own people whom he loves. He was not free of that quality - that unfortunate quality which could be found among a other emancipated western-European Jews - that quality of "selfst-has" -self-hatred - self contempt. And Heine had reached his climax when he uttered those bitter words, "Judaism", he said, "was not a religion, but a misfortune".

Heine thought himself an Hellene - a Greek - a neo-pagan - a hedonist. He extolled the blithe spirit of the Greeks, of love of beauty. He advocated a rehabilitation of the flesh - deprecated the Nazarene spirit of repression of other worldliness and asceticism. But that too, I am afraid, was an intellectual pose. He couldn't quite make the grade as an Hellene, as a Greek. He wasn't that carefree, joyous Apollo. For in the depths of his being he was a Jew and the Millenial inheritance of Sinai was his; the Jewish ethical compulsions, the sense and the duty of mission in life and of suffering and of dedication. He recounts, for example, that just before he was finally confined to his mattress grave (Heine spent the last seven years of his life on what he called the 'mattress grave' - crippled - broken by a terrible spinal disease - practically speachless - and half blind ) - just before his final fatal illness overtook him, he dragged himself to the Louvre and there collapsed before the Statue of the Venus of Milo, Goddess of Love, which symbolized all that he said he adored, in the Greek spirit. Years later, Emma Lazarus, the famous Jewish Poetess, whose poem is at the base of the Statue of Liberty, also visited the Louvre and the Statue of the Venus of Milo, gives her reaction in a sonnett and recalls in that sonnett, Heine's earlier vivid visit to that same Statue.

> Down the long hall she glistens like a star, The foam-born mother of love, transfixed to stone, Yet none the less immortal, breathing on; Time's brutal hand maimed, but could not mar. When first the enthralled enchantress from afar Dazzled mine eyes, I saw not her alone, Serenely poised on her world-worshiped throne, As when she guided once her dove-drawn car, -

-8-

But at her feet a pale, death-stricken Jew, Her life-adorer, sobbed farewell to love. Here Heine wept! Here still he weeps anew, Nor ever shall his shadow lift or move While mourns one ardent heart, one poet-brain, For vanished Hellas and Hebraic pain

And that's it. In the soul of Heine vanished Hellas and Hebraic pain - always

'zurissen' - always homeless!

During the years of his torture on his mattress grave, Heine had time to reflect upon his life - to think much about his past - about a life so shot through with pain and glory and to write his confessions. I want to close just by reading a few sentences from his Confession - what he has to say about his people - his religion - this is a dying man writing his final confession:-

"There was a time when I did not like Moses over much, probably because the Hellenic spirit predominated in me, and I could not forgive the law-giver of the Jews his hatred of imagination and of plastic art. I did not see that Moses, in spite of his hotility to the arts, was nevertheless himself a great artist and had the real artistic temperament. Only this artistic temperament was in him, as in his Egyptian fellow countrymen, directed solely towards the colassal and indestructible. But unlike the Egyptians he did not fashion his works of art of bricks and granite but he builded pyramids of men, and carved obelisks of men; he took a poor shepherd tribe and created a people which should defy the centuries, a great eternal , holy people, a people of God, which should serve all peoples as a model, and all humanity as a prototype; he created Israel! With more right than the Roman poet, can that artist, the son of Amram and the wet-nurse Jochabed, boast of having raised himself a monument which shall outlive all the images of brass!

I have never spoken with due respect of the Master or of his work, the Jews, and this too was because of my Hellenic temperament which was repelled by Jewish asceticism. My preference for Hellas has since declined. I see now that the Greeks were only beautiful youths, but that the Jews have ever been men, strong, invincible men, not only in old days, but even to this day, in spite of eighteen centuries of persecution and misery; I have learned to judge them better, and except that any pride of birth were a foolish contradiction in the champions of the Revolution and their democratic principles, the present writer might take pride in the fact that his ancestors belonged to the House of Israel, and that he is a descendant of those martyrs, who have given the world a God and a morality, and have fought and suffered on every battlefield of thought."

Well that's a noble confession. And that atomes for many of his sins and his shortcomings. The House of Israel never rejected Heine. It thinks of him with pride, with compassion, with love.

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### MIRIAM LEIKIND

#### Organist and Choir Director A. R. WILLARD

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## **MUSIC FOR SUNDAY**

### Organ

Prelude and Fugue in E Mine	or Bach
Trio - Fourth Sonata	Mendelssohn
Andante Cantabile	Dethier
Opening Psalm—Mah Tovu	Grim
Bor'chu (Congregational)	Sulzer
Sh'ma - Boruch (Congregational)	Traditional
Mi Chomocho (Congregational)	Sulzer
Kedusha	Freed
Silent Devotion—May the Words	Saminsky
Before the Address Hear Ye Isroel ("Elijah") Miss Wischmeyer	Mendelssohn
Let Us Adore-Va-anachnu	Freed

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The flowers which will grace the altar on Sunday morning, March 4th are contributed in memory of beloved wife and mother, Mollie Rocker Schonberg, by her husband David Schonberg, and children Florence Bialosky and Lester Schonberg.

Temple Memorial Book

The name of

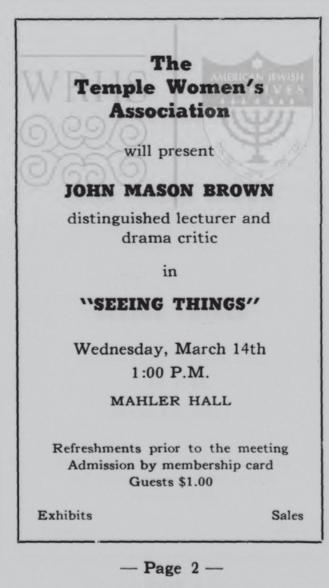
## RAYMOND DEUTSCH

has been lovingly inscribed in The Temple Memorial Book by his wife, Mrs. Raymond Deutsch. Dr. Freehof, scholar, speaker, teacher and author, has visited the Temple on previous occasions and always has been received eagerly and enthusiastically, because of his penetrating and illuminating lectures. Dr. Freehof has for many years conducted a course in the study of significant books which has attracted much attention.

I Car

Members of The Temple may bring guests to the meeting following which refreshments are planned.

Chairmen for this meeting are Mel and Ina Lazerick; Vice-chairmen, Bill and Rita Mack and Ralph and Terry Koval. Headed by Gerda Smith, hostesses are, Rena Lee Weissman, Lillian Goldscher and Betty Brown; and in charge of publicity, Marv and Riviette Grand.



lege; Dr. Hymer L. Friedell, Director of the Department of Radiology of University Hospitals of Western Re. serve University; and Mr. Elmer L.' Lindseth, President of The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company, projected in their discussion of the subject "This Atomic Era—Order or Chaos" the current need for Brotherhood. A general optimistic attitude prevailed throughout the discussion with regard to the atomic era, its benefits to mankind and the peace of the world.

Mr. Louis Seltzer, Editor of The Cleveland Press, endeared himself both to The Temple and to The Temple Men's Club for his graciousness in accepting the assignment of Moderator and giving much of his time to the preparation of the program.

Dr. John S. Millis, President of Western Reserve University, extended greetings from the National Conference of Christians and Jews of which he is Regional Brotherhood Chairman.

Dr. Leon Newman, President of The Temple Men's Club, presided at the meeting and to him and to the following members of The Men's Club, appreciation is extended for their contribution towards a successful evening: Mr. Lawrence Lurie, Program Chairman; Mr. Sidney Meadow, dinner arrangements; Mr. Ed Friedman, Mr. Hal Moses, and Dr. Joseph Gould, Publicity; Mr. Eugene Klein and Mr. Al Amster, Tickets; Mr. Harry Blachman, Mr. Sanford Sugarman, Mr. Jack Ginsberg, Mr. Henry Tobin, Dr. Louis Brooks and their staff, Hospitality; Mr. Harry Gellin, past president of The Temple Men's Club, who was active in the preliminary planning for the affair.

Adding to the enjoyment of the evening was the musical program offered by the famous Orpheus Male Chorus under the direction of Mr. Charles D. Dawe.