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Maimonides, 1935.

ABSTRACT OF THE ADDRESS DELIVERED BY DR. ABBA HILLEL SILVER OF CLEVELAND, OHIO
AT THE PENNSYLVANIA HOTEL ON ~~SUNDAY~~ ^{WEDNESDAY} EVENING, APRIL 14, 1935.

(cancelled)

Because Moses Maimonides was a man of genius, belonging to the breed of the world's supermen, he is, in a sense, above race. Nevertheless, there are visible in his way of life, as well as in the pattern of his thought certain broad distinctive contours which we like to associate with classic Jewish quality. Maimonides is for us the consummate Jew, the comprehensive epic product of Jewish life at its best. His thought-world is a unique blending of reason, faith and moral passion. Clear, incisive, methodical thinking, a high and exalted faith, and a prophetic earnestness find in him that unity after which Jewish thought has consistently aspired. Maimonides is not a rationalist exclusively, or a pietist, or a legalist, or a moralist. He is a synthesis of all of these. He is not an obscurantist who sacrifices reason to blind faith. Neither is he a rationalist who rejects everything that reason cannot grasp. Nor is he a moral sentimentalist who builds his world on uncritical wish fulfillments. He employs man's highest intellectual scaffolding to reach the towering battlements of faith. He uses both reason and faith for the foundations of his ethical system. All of which is the sovereign way of Jewish thought.

One also finds in the man himself, in his personal character and temperament qualities which we are inclined to consider essentially though not exclusively Jewish -- calm, patient wisdom, a reverence for all life, a pragmatic idealism, firmness plus forbearance, justice and charity -- that golden mean which is quite as much Hebraic as it is Hellenic.

The Jews of his day sensed all this in Moses Maimonides. They saw in him the "Light of the Exile." Jews from all parts of the world turned to him in their perplexities for counsel and guidance. Their sound instinct led them to recognize in him the leader who could be trusted because of his knowledge, sagacity and integrity to guide them aright in all their difficulties.

Those were trying times for Israel, both in the West and in the East, in Christian as well as in Mohammedan lands. It was the century of the Crusaders who paved for themselves a bloody corridor of Jewish martyrs on their way to the Holy Land, and of the Almohades, the fanatical Mohammedan Puritan sect which gave men the choice of the Koran, exile or death.

In those dark days of fear, persecution, forced conversions and exile, Jewish communities turned to Maimonides. He proffered them the mellowed wisdom of a sage and the strong faith of a man of God. With calm, considerate judgment, at times with fatherly admonition he instructed, forewarned, comforted and cheered them in their tribulations.



The National Committee for
The Maimonides Octocentennial
cordially invites you to attend
the Celebration of the Eight Hundredth Anniversary
of the birth of

Moses Maimonides

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