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Hathaway Methodist Church Men's Club, correspondence and
speech, 1963.

September 5, 1963

Rev. D. Gary Klempnauer
Hathaway Methodist Church
6060 Turney Road
Garfield Heights 25, Ohio

Dear Mr. Klempnauer:

In response to your kind letter of September 4th, I will be happy to speak at your church on Tuesday evening, November 26th. Allow me to mull over an exact title for a little while, but I have put the date in my book and will be happy to be with you. As far as the matter of an honorarium is concerned, I would ask only that your men's group make some contribution to your church work.

With all good wishes,

Cordially yours,

DANIEL JEREMY SILVER

DJS:lg

Hathaway Methodist Church

6060 Turney Road
Garfield Heights 25, Ohio

Pastor: D. Gary Klempnauer
MO 3-8438

Residence: 12912 Oak View Road

September 4, 1963

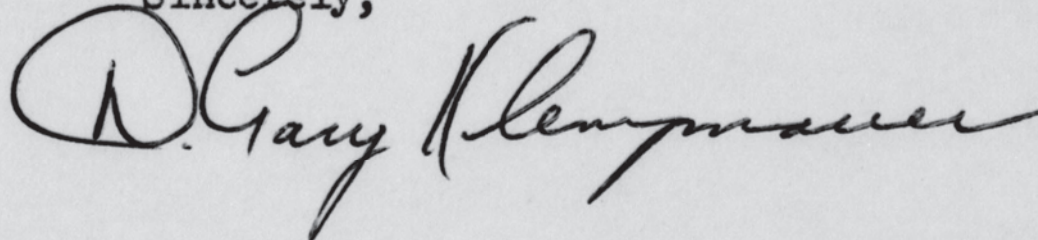
Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver
The Temple
University Circle and Silver Park

Dear Rabbi Silver,

The Men's Club of Hathaway Methodist Church is arranging its program for the coming year. The committee became excited about the possibility of having you as a speaker. I'm certain that their enthusiasm explains the reason they suggest three dates: October 22, November 26, or March 24. (The two Fall dates would be the preferred ones.) The committee suggested that a topic of interest might be "The Recent Contributions of Judaism to Our Society". Our concern is to expand our appreciation of the Jewish tradition and the contributions of this heritage to our society.

Our Men's Club is not large, so we would need to know if there were any charge or contribution we might make in your name. I certainly hope you will be able to be with us, for I know our men would value the experience.

Sincerely,



Our programs begin at 7:30 P.M. We would desire an hour's program.

Rev. Lewis
F.

The year is 1263. The place, the palace of King Jayme I in Barcelona, Spain. The occasion, a public disputation; its theme: "Judaism and Christianity". The protagonists; for the Catholics -- the Dominican monk missionary Fra Paulo Christiano; for the Jews -- Bonastruc de Porte, businessman, scholar, known to the co-religionists as Rabbi Moses, the son of Nachman -- Nachmanides.

For Fra Paulo this disputation was an occasion to be eagerly anticipated; Bonastruc, on the other hand, came only because he could not deny the royal summons. It was not that the Rabbi felt unequal to the challenge. Bonastruc was at home in the Bible, in Plato and in Arab science. Rather his fear was born from a knowledge that the disputation was never intended as a friendly meeting between college debating societies. The debaters were puppets, playing a part in a carefully contrived missionary program. Bonastruc was in a position very much like that of the ill-fated hero of a Greek tragedy. He could only play his part with becoming dignity. It was inconceivable that he be adjudged the more skillful, for the judges were to be the Catholic king and his Catholic advisers, all pledged to promote the spread of the True Faith. To present an inept defense of Judaism was to invite a royal decree demanding the Jews to surrender themselves at the fountain of baptism. All that Bonastruc could hope was that he might display sufficient nobility of person that the king would think kindly of him and of his people, and even in that case he knew he would incur the unremitting and unforgiving anger of the Church. Such indeed was the result. Bonastruc won by his bearing and skill the grudging admiration of all. A verdict of no decision was rendered. The royal command to ~~be~~ forcibly baptise all Jews was not issued, but within a year the Church had effected Bonastruc's permanent banishment from the Spanish kingdom.

Medieval history contains many references to such debates -- debates deliberately designed to reveal the error of Judaism and the truth of Christianity. Fortunately most modern states will not lend any support to such religious

fanaticism -- although Spain is still a notable exception. Fortunately most modern churches have learned to live side by side with other communions and creeds, though here, too, the Catholic church of Spain is a regrettable exception.

I would not risk injury or the deprivation of my rights of citizenship by debating with you the relative merits of Christianity and Judaism, but were I to engage in such a debate I would risk not being heard. Speech involves both the lecturer and the auditor and I am sure that you have found, as I have found, that in most discussions of religion there is much talking and little listening, much heated defense of one's own preconceptions and very little exchange of ideas.

In its own way religious debate is as futile today as it was in the Dark Ages. I have never known of a discussion of comparative religions which did not become an ~~discussion of~~ ^{argument over} competitive religious truths. I often wish that we might consider our various religions in the same way that we judge works of art. There are after all many magnificent canvases. When we judge a work of art, it is easy for us to acknowledge both our own preference and the value of others' preferences. I especially enjoy the works of Rembrandt and of the Dutch school. My wife will travel many miles to visit an exhibition of the French impressionist. My brother pays an annual pilgrimage to the Museum of Modern Art. We each have our individual favorites, master works which thrill our very being, yet each of us can appreciate the technique and the beauty and the conception of the others' preference. We value their favorite paintings as works of art, but we recognize at the same time that these particular canvases do not move us or have a particular meaning for us. The word "superiority" does not enter such comparative discussions. Returning to religion, I am at home in and exulted by Judaism. I am sure that many of you would say the same for your particular Protestant or Catholic faith. Yet how often the word "superiority" enters our discussion. We find it difficult to appreciate that another faith can give to our neighbors an insight into life and

a sense of spiritual ennoblement at least equal to our own. We find it difficult to realize that the value of Judaism to me or of Protestantism to you lies as much in our own psychological and emotional needs, as it does in the truth of our particular doctrine or catechism. It seems to me that we must learn that religion is an art, the art of life, rather than a scientific truth. That religion must not only be right but right for us. That truth is not restricted to any communion and that no communion contains all truth.

Having said this, you will understand that I do not propose to debate Judaism and Christianity nor do I intend to establish the superiority of Judaism. I do not feel under any compulsion to convince you that Judaism is better for you. It may be. It may not be. It is sufficient that Judaism ennobles and exalts my life and the lives of many millions of my co-religionists.

I speak this preamble with selfish purpose. I would like to be listened to. I would like this hour to be one in which we exchange ideas. I want to open your minds to the possible meaning of Judaism in my life. What I have to say will not disparage in any way your faith. It will seek only to make you aware of another set of religious values, one which has great meaning to a university-trained, scientifically oriented young man of our twentieth century. It is spoken in the hope that having gained this understanding you will be able to judge more accurately the world in which you live and the attitudes of many who are your neighbors and friends.

Were you to visit my Temple -- and I hope some day that you will, for it is a magnificent, unusual and quite beautiful building, one of the marvels of religious architecture in America -- were you to visit my Temple you would not hear any appeal for missionary funds nor would you see any collection box labeled foreign or home missions. We Jews do not support either missions nor missionaries. It is not important to us that all the world accept Judaism. It is not important to us that all the world practice our religious calendar. What is important for us is that every one live by the Ten Commandments and concern himself with

establishing justice and peace. Judaism has not set as a goal the establishment of one universal church to which all true believers must belong. We want a good world, not necessarily a Jewish world. We seek to establish peace in our world, not necessarily to establish the synagogue throughout its length and breadth. We look forward to the day when "God will be one and His name will be one".

I do not believe, nor do I really look forward to the day when all earth men will be Jewish, nor do I believe that only Jews can enter Heaven. I have the feeling that much missionary activity takes a religion's mind off the development of man's character and society and substitutes a concern for what is called man's immortal soul. I do not believe that the gates of Heaven open only to Jews. Judaism twenty centuries ago accepted the statement that the righteous among all peoples have a share in the world to come. Accepting this principle, it becomes not man's catechism but his character which counts religiously. Personally, I reject as presumptuous all claims by any religion which asserts its exclusive control over the keys to the kingdom. I do not believe that any earthly religion has been issued the authority to act as a visa-issuing agency to Heaven. I do not know what God has established as His entrance requirements. "God's ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our thoughts. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts." I do not presume, therefore, to guess who shall enter Heaven and who shall be denied entrance; indeed, I think it folly to dwell overmuch on such questions. For these are questions which can never be answered until we shall have died and experienced whatever lies in store. But this much I do feel, that only a man of limited fellow feeling would conceive that God might judge a man by his doctrine rather than by his deeds. There is no mission established through my Temple, because I and my congregation feel that there are many roads by which man may please God. ~~That~~ A ticket to Heaven may be purchased at any of a number of religious travel agencies.

In my heart of hearts I look on my faith as a guide book to better character and to a juster world and to a deeper understanding of my place in it. I think very little about death and what lies beyond death. I am quite prepared to say, and do say to my Confirmation Class and to others, that I do not insist on any one point of view on such questions as immortality and resurrection. I have an abiding faith that the God who has brought me into life and sustains me in life will not forsake me entirely in death. ~~But~~ Beyond this my mind cannot penetrate.

I do not believe that the gates of Heaven open only to Jews. I do believe that Judaism can help to lead a better life.

I like to think of Judaism as a way of life. By this I mean that I am satisfied to accept certain questions as unanswerable, but I cannot be satisfied to lead an aimless, purposeless and directionless existence. I am convinced that Judaism is meaningful to me in its insistence on man's social responsibilities, on man's essential dignity and worth-whileness, on the necessity and possibility of establishing freedom and justice and peace. I look on Judaism as a life discipline rather than a doctrinal discipline, and I am not unique in this. If you will study my faith you will find little in it that is doctrinely definitive. To become a rabbi I studied at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati for six years after I graduated in history from Harvard College. I studied the history and literature of the Jewish people, the Hebrew language, a great deal about education and human relations and psychology, and, interestingly, in all that period I was never asked to subscribe to any catechism. On the occasion of my ordination no profession of faith was demanded of me, nor has any been demanded of me since. Worship with us, and you will not find any statement of dogma in our worship service.

Theologically, Judaism is uncomplicated. Theologically the only formulation on which Judaism insists is a belief in the unity and existence of God: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt."

I think of God as Creator. I think of God as that power beyond man which has establish the world for a purpose and placed man in this world with a purpose. I think of God as the power beyond myself and my world which makes for righteousness. A Biblical skeptic wrote: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." My faith in God convinces me that life is not meaningless but purposeful, that our efforts are not futile but fruitful.

I reject all myths about God. I believe that the Biblical legends reveal philosophical and moral truths, but that they must not be taken literally. When Moses asked God to reveal Himself, God rejected this request and ordered Moses to turn his face to the rock, ^{For} ~~that~~ man cannot comprehend God's presence. ^{What ~~did~~ Moses} ~~And then~~ ^{DID SUCCEED IN UNDERSTANDING ABOUT GOD WAS HIS} ~~Moses understood that God's nature is one of moral qualities.~~ "The Lord, the Lord God is merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and ever true, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin". My God has neither shape nor form ^{As} ~~and~~ men understand shape ~~or~~ form. I think of Him largely as the quintessence of moral virtue although I recognize that this does not begin to define His ^{Full} ~~true~~ nature. ~~It~~ ^{As} like the dark side of the moon, which is there though no man has yet seen it, so the full splendor of God remains hidden. It is sufficient that we understand that He is good and just and holy. To understand this of God establishes basic religious disciplines, and Judaism has many disciplines. "Holy shalt thou be, for I, the Lord thy God, am holy". Imitatio Dei, our never achieved attempt to build our lives in imitation of God's moral qualities -- this is our real discipline.

Judaism has many disciplines: "Love thy neighbor as thyself"; "Proclaim freedom unto the land"; "Justice, justice shalt thou pursue"; "Relieve the oppressed, comfort the grief-stricken"; "Help the wounded and feed the poor". Judaism rests on an unalterable conviction. It is the conviction that God placed man not in a vale of tears but in a garden of promise. Judaism looks on man not as impotent and unequal to the challenges of life, but as the Bible says: "Created in the image of God", full of potential and of a promise which needs only realization.

There is an ancient story told that when God had created Adam He took him to a ledge near the top of a high mountain and pointed out to him the magnificent glories of nature ^{AND OF} ~~the~~ the world which lay before them, ^{He Then} and said to Adam, "This is now your world. It is a good world. Make the most of it." Judaism is optimistic about man's potential: "And it shall come to pass, in the end of days, the mountain of the Lord's hosts shall be established as the top of the mountains and shall be exalted above the hills. . . . They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their swords into pruning hooks. Nations shall not lift up their swords against nations, neither shall there be war any more."

Judaism is a deeply demanding faith, because it puts the burden of responsibility squarely on man's shoulders: "See I have placed before you this day the blessing and the curse -- life and death. Choose ye life." There are two ways open to each of us. Our way of self-discipline and of service. The other a way of self-seeking and indifference. Man can bring paradise to earth or he can destroy all that God has created and man has through the centuries improved. Judaism maintains that if men fail, the want rests not with God's original plan but with our inadequate planning.

How does man know what he must do in life? How do I answer the congregant who comes for counsel about a business or family problem? I am sometimes tempted to tell him to read the Bible. Most human situations are prefigured in the Bible and the great ideals of human activities ^{ARE THERE} set forth. My faith has always been centered on the Bible, but Judaism has never been Bible-limited. There is a line which I like from our prayer book which reads: "Help us to see all truth, whether shining from the pages of ancient revelations or reaching us through the seers of our own day." Men have wrestled with the problems of human existence in every age. The Bible is a source of great ideals, but we must turn to later philosophers and to our modern social sciences to supplement and pinpoint and ^{MORE CONCRETE} give guidance, ~~more~~ ~~immediately to the point.~~ There are three basic disciplines in Jewish life. One is, as might be expected, worship. The second, as I have indicated, rectitude and

proper conduct, and the third is study. Life is complex. Our mind, our personality is complex. To lead the good life is not a simple matter. The man who gives a few dollars to charity is not necessarily a good man; the man who comes regularly to Temple is not necessarily a good man; the man who is deemed eminently respectable by his community is not necessarily a good man. We must have understanding as well as faith, and so my Temple is a place of study and debate as well as prayer and worship. Each year we hold meetings which discuss and analyse the moral implications of current problems. We try to relate moral ideals to such current problems as the integration of races in our public schools, the development of rehabilitation centers for our emotionally disturbed, the extension of civil liberties to all of our citizens. Each and every contemporary problem is scrutinized so that when we in our personal lives are faced with these problems we may have some insight into their solution. There is no debate in my Temple as to whether the pulpit ought to discuss politics. All agree that it must -- that it should. Every political issue involves moral considerations. I do not mean by this that I favor from my pulpit any particular political candidate, though ^{I SOMETIMES EVEN DO THIS} when a man absolutely unworthy of public trust is submitted for election, ~~I do even this~~. Last year from my pulpit I discussed the necessity of co-existence, the Right to Work Amendment, the Sunday Blue Laws Debate, the problem of inter-group relationships in our community, the role of the United Nations, my feelings as to present penal methods. When I speak from my pulpit I do not speak ex-cathedra as the authoritative voice of Judaism nor do I speak the united mind of my congregants, but rather I seek to express my concern and to suggest, based on my studies, a possible and acceptable solution. Perhaps I can best close this section by reminding you that the title that I bear -- rabbi -- is simply a Hebrew word which means "teacher". I am hired by my Temple not so much to officiate at its services -- any layman can conduct the service -- or to celebrate marriages -- a marriage can also be solemnized by any authorized layman -- rather I am hired because I have devoted a good bit of my

life to the study of Jewish tradition. I am hired as guide and teacher to suggest possible solutions to perplexing modern problems.

The synagogue has three functions in Jewish life. It is a place of worship; it is a place of study; it is a place of meeting. As I have indicated, its meetings have a larger purpose than pure sociability. These meetings are a forum for the exchange of ideas. This year Justice William Douglas of the United States Supreme Court, ~~Mr. Robert Kennedy, the Chief Counsel of the Senate Crimes Racket~~ ^{Professor Kenneth Brown - the Michel Rosenberg in Berlin, Dr. C. D. Dell} ~~Committee~~, and Judge Samuel Leibowitz of the Federal Bench in New York and others come to us to share their ideas.

Judaism reveres books and knowledge. It abhors ~~simplicity~~ ^{generality} and platitudes. The ideal religious figure among Jews is not the simple-minded saint but the scholar-saint.

The Bible said it for us: "Do not be righteous overmuch". And what does the Bible mean if not that each of us sometimes assumes that we know absolutely and unmistakably what is right and what is wrong. I can think, however, of occasions in which even the self-evident truths of the Ten Commandments ought to be violated. Judaism counsels us not to judge another man until we stand in his shoes. Jewish tradition has it that Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because he spoke too harshly to the children of Israel when they were recalcitrant and rebellious. Judaism has it that the religious leader must be a defense attorney and not the prosecuting attorney when he speaks to his congregation. When we make criticism it must be coupled with understanding and with love. I do not preach hell-fire and damnation, rather I try to open my congregation's minds to the beauties and the possibilities of what I call the good life.

It is interesting that the Jewish community has never developed an extensive penal code, but that we have over the years developed an extensive program of community service. We try not to punish but to protect and to encourage. The Jewish community still today maintains its own family service associations, its

centers for disturbed children, its hospitals, charitable organizations and the like.

For being a way of life Judaism is both a communion and a community. We set great store in making available to our own people all the resources of modern social service, counsel and medicine, at the same time that we encourage our people to participate financially and personally in similar institutions maintained by the larger community.

I have spoken very little of the actual practices, the holidays and customs, the rites and rituals of Jewish life.

(see next page)



I have ~~spoken very little of the actual practice, the holidays and customs,~~
~~the rites and rituals of Jewish life.~~ Judaism of course has its own religious
calendar and its own set of symbols which are both suggestive and beautiful. I
have spoken little about our customs because I have tried to make you sense the
direction of Jewish life, its larger mission, and the holidays and the rituals are
means to that end, rather than ends in themselves. I personally find great meaning
when I raise aloft the wine cup at the beginning of the Sabbath, or when I build
a temporary booth of leaves for our thanksgiving holiday. But I recognize that there
are as many sets of customs and rituals in the world as there are cultures and creeds.
Many of these in many faiths are moving and are majestic, yet ultimately it is not
a religion's customs but the commitment of its congregants to a certain life outlook
which is essential and it is for that reason that I have concentrated on making
explicit to you Judaism's life outlook.

