

THE JEWISH FORUM

Dr. S. T. H. HURWITZ, Editor

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Our Contributors

We take pleasure in introducing to our readers the following new contributors:

Dr. A. A. Roback, Instructor in Psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, the first part of whose contribution on "The Yiddish Proverb—A Study in Psychology" will be read with great interest.

Mr. Isaac Rosengarten, teacher in the New York Public Schools, communal worker and supervisor of the Jewish parochial schools of New York City, gives a correct delineation of the spineless, easy-going Jewish public school teacher in his article "The Jewish Teacher in the New York Public Schools" and incidentally throws much light on the subject of prejudice against Jews in the public school system.

Mr. Samuel R. Travis, oil magnate and communal leader, who has made it his aim in life to help place orthodox Judaism in America on a solid foundation, outlines his plan of reconstructing Jewish life in the symposium "What Ails American Judaism?"

Rabbi Alter Abelson, who is already known to our readers as a poet of rare gift, contributes the first part of his religious ode, "God's Gazelle," which reads like an ancient psalm.

The August issue of THE JEWISH FORUM will contain the first article in a series of "Chapters on the Cultural History of the Jews of Russia" with especial emphasis on "Leon Mandelstamm and his Time," by Peter Wiernik, editor of the *Jewish Morning Journal*, and one of the leading Yiddish journalists in this country. Among other contributors to this issue are Dr. A. A. Roback, Rabbi Alter Abelson, Ezekiel Leavitt, Dr. Meyer Waxman and Anna G. Abelson.

What Ails American Judaism?

A SYMPOSIUM.

"Democratic Judaism vs. Philanthropic Judaism."

By SAMUEL R. TRAVIS, of Tulsa, Okla., and New York City.

The radical fault with American Jewry is its entire dependence on charity. Its character is, accordingly, completely materialistic since it is wholly dependent on the generosity of our successful practical men; although in every instance those who contribute generously are undoubtedly sincere and well-meaning.

However, it must frankly be said that as soon as our captains of industry have achieved their position in life which, in almost all cases requires many years to attain, in due course of time they drift away from their place of origin because of the influence of a new environment and lose their spiritual and religious ballast. Due to this condition our men of means will readily contribute to the support of hospitals, orphan asylums, homes for the aged and infirm, consumptive homes, and the like. They are in a position to feel with the hungry, the ill, and the needy. The conservation of the human body, the physical, and the material, appeal naturally to such men. But the other side of their makeup, the spiritual and religious, has been woefully neglected and lost sight of, with the result that our homes of the spirit, our seats of learning, our religious institutions, our spiritual leaders, have been left to shift for themselves and to be supported by the noble immigrants who have recently come here from Eastern Europe and who, though still poor, struggle hard to maintain, sometimes at the greatest sacrifices and under the most trying conditions, these homes of the Jewish spirit and our spiritual leaders.

The great misfortune to which our people has been subjected is the desire on the part of our newly-favored rich men who belong originally to the orthodox wing of Jewry to imitate our German brethren and to reform their Judaism. They yield to the lines of least resistance and speedily eliminate their traditions, give their children a secular education to the exclusion of all study of our Torah, history, philosophy and culture, which are given up as necessities of Jewish life. They follow the impulses of their particular emotions without taking account of the consequences of their deeds to their race. If that is what so-called practical American Judaism stands for, I, for my part, am content to follow in the path of my fathers with all the zeal and power at my command and this I deem to be a more tolerant and honorable policy.

We are living in times of great events and the reconstruction of Judaism can easily be attained. To remedy the present evils in Jewish life the following is my plan: We must replace charity by a policy of individual taxation. A federation of all synagogues should be established in each Jewish community, every hundred members of a synagogue to elect one or two representatives to this federation. These representatives should formulate practical plans for the consolidation of all Jewish forces and adopt a policy of taxation for the support of all Jewish institutions and religious functionaries, so that these will be placed in an independent position whereby they shall gain the respect of the world not through philanthropy, which is the character of the present-day Judaism, but through spirituality, through positive Jewish knowledge and not through a false pretense at Jewish learning. The reason why our youth has drifted away from us and constitutes a good percentage of criminals, gangsters, and anarchists, is because of the lack of adequate instruction in our own culture and traditions.

The reconstruction of Jewish life is only possible through the levy of a nominal tax on all Jewish individuals and not through charitable contributions. The support of Judaism in this country must be made the concern of all Jews and not of a few only. It must be democratic in its character. We pose as a godly people but the mere pose will not yield us our standing. We must organize our Jewish life on broad principles.

People complain that our religious institutions are not modern enough. Our orthodox people desire these institutions to be as modern as possible but insist upon the learning that is taught in them remaining positive and not a mere false imitation. But our great misfortune has been that our men of resources have failed to recognize the importance of supporting our true Jewish places of learning. To conduct modern institutions we must demand sums of money in proportion to modern needs.

I hope there are still a few successful intelligent men who will shake off their vanity and come forth to the assistance of this constructive work for which provision has already been made in New York City. I am sure that this plan will meet with success if properly carried out and will remedy the great evils in Jewish life and save us from the plight of Sodom at the time when God ordered her destruction and when hardly ten righteous men could be found to redeem it from this destruction. The time has come to reorganize Judaism in America and all earnest Jews must come forward and help in this great work.