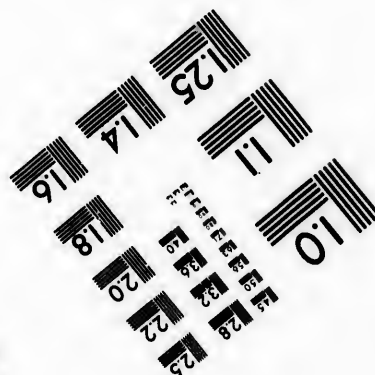
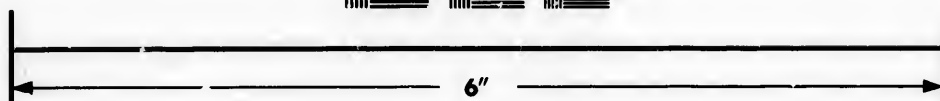
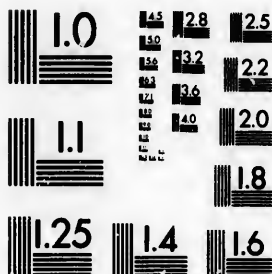


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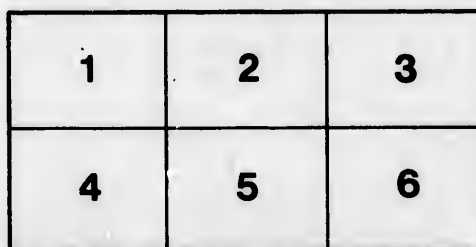
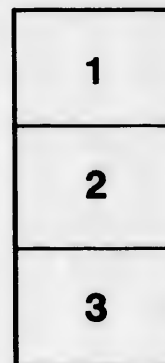
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איש צדיק

THE RIGHTEOUS MAN.

A SERMON

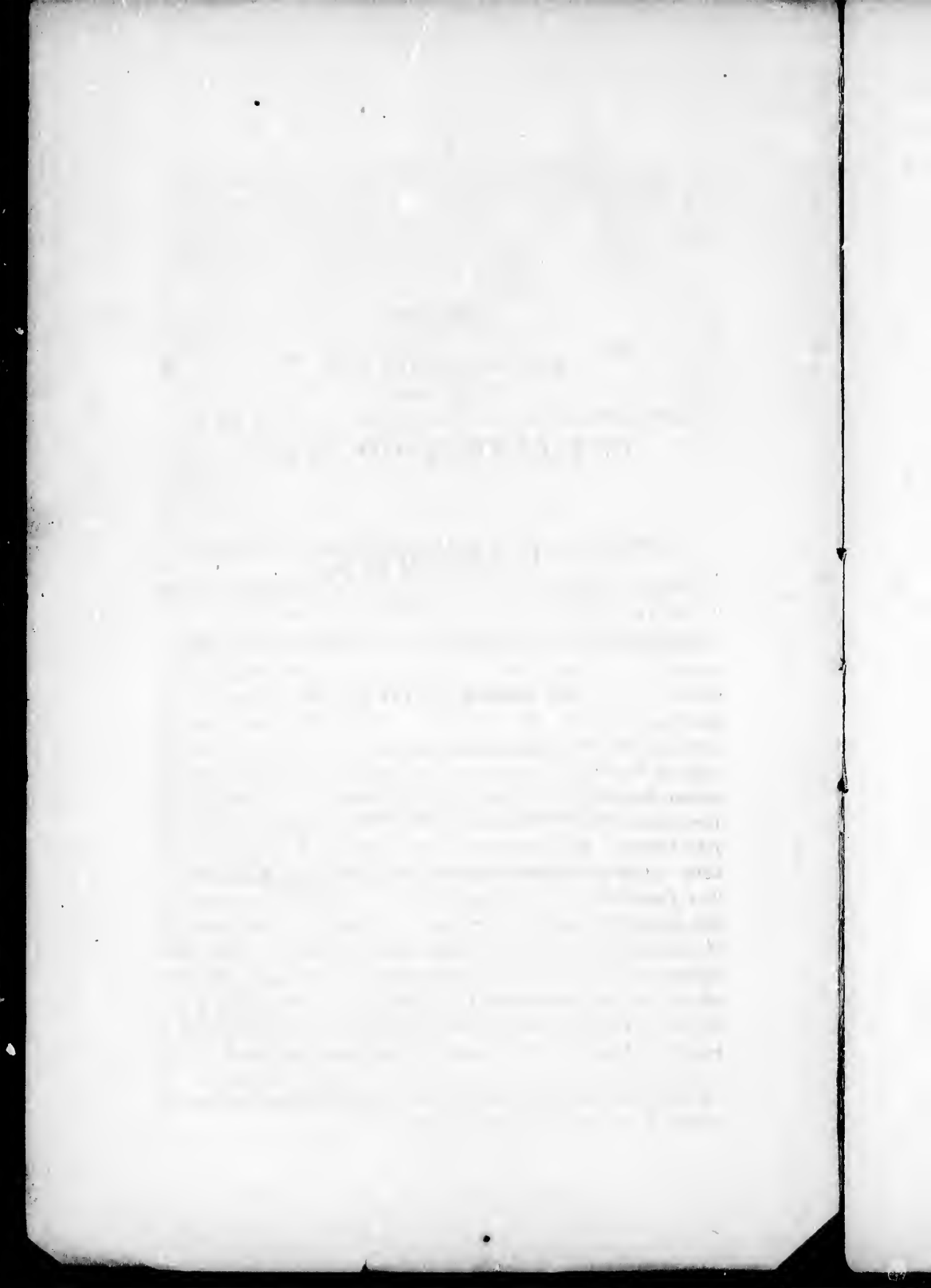
COMMEMORATING THE BESTOWAL OF PUBLIC HONORS ON

SIR MOSES MONTEFIORE,

BY THE CITY OF LONDON :

PREACHED IN MONTREAL, ON SABBATH, NOAH, 5625 ;

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR DE SOLA, PH.D.



איש צדיק

THE RIGHTEOUS MAN,

A SERMON, PREACHED IN MONTREAL, ON SABBATH NOAH, 5825, BY THE REV.

PROFESSOR A. DE SOLA, PH.D.

אלה תולדת נח נח איש צדיק תמים היה ברותיו את האלהים התהלך נח :

"These are the generations of Noah : Noah was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations ; and Noah walked with God."—Gen. vi. 9.

BRETHREN!—The concluding portion of last week's Parashah, as well as the initial verses of that which we have read to-day, present a dark and humiliating picture of the wickedness of antediluvian man. We find this wickedness to have been so extreme, that Scripture, accommodating its language to human mode of expression, informs us "it repented God He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at his heart." Therefore, He determined utterly to destroy every living thing, "from man unto beast." Noah however found grace in the eyes of the Lord. And the words of the text supply the reason why Noah thus found favor in the divine Light. He was "a righteous man and perfect in his generations." Referring to this iteration of expression in the text, Aben Ezra remarks "Noah was righteous" in his actions, and "perfect" in his heart, and this not only in the generation of the flood, but in succeeding generations ; for he lived until Abraham had attained his fifty-eighth year.* "And, therefore," adds Nachmanides, with most of the

* We are reminded of this fact by the following very ingenious *memoria technica*, ואברהם אבינו בן נ"ח כאשר כת נח.

other commentators, "was he deemed worthy to be saved from the flood; for the righteous shall not fail to appear guiltless when in judgment; while the reverse shall be the case with the wicked, in accordance with the principle laid down by the law. (Deut. xxv. 1,) 'They shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked!'" "And Noah's children," continues this learned teacher, "were also saved through his merits; for it would have been a punishment to Noah had they been cut off with the wicked, among whom indeed they could not be classed, since their father taught them by precept and example, so that they became righteous like himself. Noah, then, eminently deserved the glorious assurance he received from the Eternal כי אתך ראיתי צדיק לפני ברך הוה that him alone had God seen righteous before him, notwithstanding there had lived many generations since man first commenced to corrupt his way on the earth. And, therefore, the Medras Rabba, quoting from Proverbs xiv. 11, reminds us, 'The house of the wicked was to be overthrown, but the tent of the upright was to flourish.'"

Bearing in mind these teachings of our sage commentators, so pregnant with pious reflection and spiritual profit, we will now for a brief space inquire in what the righteousness of Noah consisted, and then referring to our own times and circumstances, see how it should influence our own conduct as Israelites and as members of the great human family. Turning to the sacred narrative for a solution of the first question we have proposed, we find that Noah's righteousness consisted in both his FAITH and PRACTICE. And first, we have to consider Noah's *faith*. He lived among a people universally corrupt. וירא אלהים את הארץ והנה נשחטה. All the then inhabited portions of the world presented to the eye of Omniscience a moral desert with but one small oasis—even that which was covered by the tent of the righteous Noah. Every religious precept and rule of conduct that had yet been revealed to man were openly and generally violated. As a consequence, the moral and mental deterioration of the race went rapidly on, and all perception of the good and the wise, of the right and the true, became impossible to them; and they sunk to the lowest level that humanity can attain. But different indeed with Noah

and his household. Within the purer precincts of that more faithful home could none of the abominations of their abandoned contemporaries find place. Engaged in deducing from what had been already revealed, yet farther important religious truths, the effects of such an occupation we can be at no loss to divine; and so elevated and spiritualized did Noah become that, when the end of all flesh was revealed to him, he could at once believe and acknowledge the justice of the divine fiat. But, as for the corrupt race around him, can we not imagine the ineffable disdain with which they received the tidings of the threatened flood? Can we not almost hear the contemptuous laugh and blasphemous jest, which replied to every exhortation of Noah to reformation? He, a dotard, might believe; but why should they? True, brethren, why should they? they whose carnal minds could not be raised above earthly things; who saw nature pursuing its course in one uniform manner; the rains of heaven descending not to destroy, but to fructify and bless; the rivers and the lakes confined within bounds they could not overrun,—how could minds such as theirs believe in any change, in something the like of which they had never seen, and of which they could form no other conception, but of increased doubt and unbelief? Noah alone stands aloof from the scoffing unbelievers. Pre-eminent in faith, he alone “was a righteous man, perfect in his generations.”

And what brethren, was the *practice* of Noah? If you will but examine the scriptural details of the size and form of the ark he was directed to make, you will find that an almost impossible task lay before the venerable patriarch. He had not been blessed like some of his predecessors and contemporaries with many sons. Three only could respond to his call for aid in his undertaking. And yet, with a perseverance, unequalled perhaps in all history, he labored with his three sons on this ark, which as modern men of science have conclusively shown, was not only capable of containing many more than the inhabitants assigned to it, but the most expert mathematician could not assign the proportions of a vessel better accommodated for its purpose. In the great labor bestowed; in the immense cost incurred; in re-

sisting the interruptions, and overcoming the obstacles thrown in his way by the scoffing sinners around him; and finally, in entrusting himself with his wife and family, in a vessel the capability of which to stem the turbulent manes of a mighty flood, he necessarily had no means of ascertaining—in all these things see we clearly that the practice of Noah, not less than his faith, entitled him to the proud cognomen of “a righteous man, perfect in his generations.”

And now, brethren, we would proceed to ask how this behavior of Noah should affect our own conduct as Israelites, and as members of the human family. It were scarcely needful to remind you that as the peculiar people, selected to fulfil the glorious vocation of missionaries of the Most High to the world, it devolves upon you, even more than did it upon Noah, to exhibit in faith and deed the fullest appreciation of your grand destiny. And while, like Noah, you strive to be perfect with the Lord your God, you must also exhort to faithfulness those amongst you, who too fondly attach themselves to the world, and for its empty honors and hollow triumphs will barter all, that can give them a claim to the proudest of all titles—that of an Israelite, and seem but too anxious to deny a descent the most ancient, and the most aristocratic, the world can show—even that from the princely Abraham; and all this for the shadow and the tinsel, which can never ultimately satisfy. Such carnal-minded degenerates, worthy compeers of the corrupt race of the flood, unable to lift their infatuated gaze from earth, can neither see nor understand aught that is above their restricted vision. They cannot understand that, if they are “righteous” as Israelites, they may yet be “perfect” in the discharge of all the duties devolving upon them as citizens of the world. But, my hearers, for our part, we will not be thus wilfully blind. We will examine our history as a people, and we shall find that, from the period of the earliest progenitors of our race, a strict observance of all the requirements of Israel’s religion has ever been found by our fathers to be quite compatible with the fullest and most zealous discharge of their duties as citizens of the various Gentile states in which their lot has been cast. We will not stop to notice how this compatibility has extended even to the discharge of the

highest administrative functions, such as in the cases of Joseph in Egypt, Ezra, Nehemiah, Mordecai in Babylonia and Persia, and in more modern times, Abarbanel in Spain; to-day we would rather refer to living instances. Well, brethren, during the present week we have all learned with much gratification, that the corporation of London, have voted the freedom of the city and an address to Sir Moses Montefiore.* Now, who is this man, on whom a city, the first in the world, bestows a distinction which, as the address informs us, "has from time immemorial been voted to distinguished naval commanders, to renowned soldiers, and statesmen," in Christian Great Britain, "who have prized the honor exceedingly?" Not being one of these, was the honor

* It is a cheering sign of the times when a Christian journalist can publish, and his readers endorse, sentiments like the following, contained in the "Montreal Herald" of 5th November:—

PRESENTATION OF THE FREEDOM OF THE CITY OF LONDON TO SIR MOSES MONTEFIORE.—English papers, recently received, contain accounts of the presentation of an address accompanying the gift of the freedom of the City of London to the eminent Jewish philanthropist, Sir Moses Montefiore. We reproduce with much pleasure, the address of the Lord Mayor, and the reply of Sir Moses, not as mere ordinary news items, but as exhibiting one of the most remarkable triumphs of the cause of civil and religious liberty, which it has fallen to our lot to record. For be it remarked, that this spontaneous token of respect, this expression of the esteem and good-will of the citizens of the world's metropolis, is accorded to one of the most rigidly orthodox members of the Jewish church that could well be found, while on a more lax adherent of the ancient faith similar honors have not yet been bestowed. It speaks volumes, then, for the good taste, the liberality and the enlightenment of the Corporation of the great city, that they so readily and so handsomely recognise the merits and virtues of the man, not as a follower of the popular religion, but as a consistent adherent of another creed. "To you, Sir Moses Montefiore," says the address, "a distinguished member of the Hebrew community, this great city has voted a resolution of thanks expressive of their approval of the consistent course you have pursued for a long series of years," &c. We think we are not over-estimating the importance of the event on which we are commenting, if we consider it as an additional assurance that "the world still moves," and that men are daily discovering more and more,—that, though of diverse creeds and nationalities, they may yet put aside minor differences of opinion and dogma, sink the *odium theologicum*, and walk hand in hand together, to do the great work, which patriotism and philanthropy point out. We now subjoin the address, which we can well imagine is regarded with the most lively satisfaction by the recipient's conforming brethren, as it will be by every true friend of civil and religious liberty.

bestowed, because his gold and silver are much, his houses many, and his lands broad exceedingly? Nay, not so, but because mindful of the teaching of his religion, he has freely dispensed of his great substance—not in the mere fripperies and follies of the world, or in what would minister to vanity and display, but in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, erecting houses of prayer, remembering thee, O Jerusalem! establishing schools for the ignorant, hospitals for the sick, houses of industry for the unemployed, homes of refuge for the needy and decayed, and all this without limitation of place or cost. Again, was he thus distinguished, because Queen, Emperor, Sultan and Czar, have each and all delighted to show him honor? Nay, but because, he had only sought them, not for his own exaltation, but, as the address reminds us, “to alleviate the sufferings of his co-religionists, and at the same time to alleviate the sufferings and miseries of people of all creeds and denominations.” Ay, he forgot not the law which his great prototype Moses commanded, “thou shall love the stranger,” nor the instructions of Israel’s teachers to help the sick and the miserable, be they Jew, or Gentile. Was he thus honored, brethren, because unmindful of the claims of his religion, he lived only for this world, and, by display, sought to obtain higher honors than had ever been accorded to his co-religionists? Nay, none knew better than that court, that the highest honor the recipient had ever sought during his long career was that, which a hearty and unmistakeable identification with his religion and people afforded him. His consistent course is especially referred to in the address. When himself discharging high civic functions, his table proved that he was not unmindful of the dietary obligations of his religion. And, when England’s Queen, desirous of giving an especial mark of her royal favor, bestowed on him the privilege of bearing supporters to his arms—limited only to peers of the realm, and a few others—the word ירושלם in Hebrew characters, prominent on these supporters, showed how he appreciated the royal distinction; and it is a recorded fact, that his choice was honored with the special approval of our good Queen. To such a man, then—to this strictly conforming and uncompromising Israelite is it that the address and honor have been voted. He it is, whom the

address assures us the great city "thought worthy to receive the tribute of their respect and admiration."

Be it then our most earnest endeavor ever to lead the consistent, uncompromising Jewish life. True, we are not called upon to proclaim our faithfulness from the house-tops, nor to declare our orthodoxy at the street corners; but we certainly are required by every feeling of self-respect, consistency, and duty, not to swerve from the strict boundary line laid down for us—not to flaunt our mean-spiritedness and degeneracy in the faces of those, who can only regard with cold contempt the sacrifices of principle made to obtain their favor and applause. Then, let us act wisely and well our parts. Let us remember that, though on account of our grievous sins our national glory hath departed, and we are in many places yet the victims of contumely and oppression, we have still a bright light beaming upon us, even that which erst was kindled on Sinai's Mount; and we have the cheering voice of prophecy to assure us, that our vocation shall be completely fulfilled. Who, indeed, can read the glorious words of to-day's Haphtorah, and not *feel* that this is so. Saith the eloquent Isaiah, *ברגע קטן עזבתך וברחמים גדולים אקבץ* "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercies will I gather thee." Let us then cultivate the faith and imitate the practice of Noah. Let us believe, even though there be amongst us those who, like Noah's contemporaries, are too carnal-minded to do more than ask the "how" and the "when"—let us have full faith in our future, in the restoration, in the "gathering" that is promised to us. Farther, as Noah firmly believed in the coming of the flood, although its advent was delayed for more than a century after its announcement, so let us not less implicitly believe in that coming day of judgment, even though it be delayed until our bones, and even the tombstones, that mark our last resting-place, shall have returned to their original elements—that *יום גדול ונורא* "great and tremendous day," when we shall each and all have to meet the eye of an omniscient Judge, and listen to the irrevocable sentence He shall pass on our faith and deeds in this life. Then, happy we, if not wilfully blinding ourselves as did the generation of the flood, we have lived the life of preparation, securing for ourselves the

means of safety the holy volume has revealed to us. Oh, happy we, if we have built us up an ark, in which we can with confidence commit our soul when it floats from its present earthly tenement on the waves of eternity to final judgment.

Doubtless, brethren, in our persistent strivings to build up our spiritual ark, and in our contempt for all worldly lures, we shall earn for ourselves the hate of all the mere worldlings in our midst, whom by implication our conduct will condemn, and who will, therefore, freely bestow upon us such epithets as madmen, enthusiasts, and fanatics. But, like Noah, we must stand firm, and desist not in our task until it is finished. And in this work must we, like Noah, closely associate with us our children, or else will they rise up against us on the dread day of judgment, and accuse us, as we can imagine the children of the flood to have accused their parents when their doom was before them. Yes, brethren, cannot we hear even above the voice of the mighty waters, and the opening of the windows of heaven, and the breaking up of the fountains of the great deep, the agonized reproaches of those perishing children, "Why have you made no preparation for this—why have you not warned us—why have you not believed in God's messenger, and why have you not counselled us to believe? Brethren, God grant that on the great day there be no cause thus to reproach us. But on the contrary, when we feel our last hour is come, when the coldness of dissolution is spreading over us, and this world is fast fading from us with all its fleeting joys and sorrows, oh! may it be the chief solace, the sweetest comfort of such a moment to reflect that, like Noah, we have not prepared an ark for ourselves alone but for the saving of our household also, and have taught them by faith and practice, by an undeviating, consistent following of the saving doctrines of Judaism, to live for another and better estate, to save, themselves while the avenging waves are engulfing the wicked and impenitent, around them. Then shall we see realized in us the generations of the righteous, which our pious sages tells us are chiefly their good deeds, עקר חולדותיהם של צדיקים מעשים טובים.

Let us now close, my hearers, by entreating you earnestly to strive at all times to earn for yourselves the proud titles the Scripture bestows on Noah, אִישׁ צַדִּיק "a perfect man." Do you, brethren,

ren, closely pursue righteousness for its own sake alone, and by a strict, uncompromising adherence to Israel's law and Israel's faith obtain the esteem of your fellow-men, and the approval of your God? תמים היה בדותיו "Noah was perfect in his generations." Join to a strict observance of your religious obligations, a full and conscientious discharge of all those duties that devolve upon you as members of the one great, human family; do this not because your predecessors have gained earthly honors from such a course, or because contemporaries have in a signal manner obtained Gentile applause, but because כל שריות הבריות נוחה הימנו רוח המקום "He whom the spirit of man approves, the spirit of God approves." Finally, את האלהים התהלך נח "Noah walked with God." Saith the prophet Micah, "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Eternal require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Here, brethren, have we both precept and example. And, may God bless them to us, so that we may find safe refuge, and everlasting salvation in Him וארין עון and the ark of his strength. Amen.

