

# CREATIVE JUDAISM

*By*

IRA EISENSTEIN

With gratitude to the PHILADELPHIA  
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*Creative Judaism*.

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## PREFACE

SINCE THE PUBLICATION of *Judaism As A Civilization*, by Mordecai M. Kaplan, a great deal of interest has been aroused by its courageous analysis of the ills of Jewish life and by its original and constructive program for American Jewry. The detailed manner, however, in which some of the problems are there discussed, necessitated a treatment which is too elaborate for the average reader. For that reason, a number of people interested in acquainting themselves or their students with the conception of Judaism as a civilization have requested that a shortened and simplified version of the book be prepared. This digest was undertaken in response to that request. The arrangement of the material in *Judaism As a Civilization* has been faithfully followed, even to the division of the chapters. In the presentation of some of the problems, the material in *Judaism In Transition*, by the same author, was drawn upon.

The manuscript of this digest has been carefully examined by Dr. Kaplan, and the present writer is indebted to him for numerous corrections and additions without which the presentation of his philosophy and program would have been both incomplete and inaccurate. Acknowledgment is made to The Macmillan Company for permission to publish this digest of *Judaism As A Civilization*.

I. E.

September, 1936.

## PREFACE TO THE REVISED EDITION

WHEN *Creative Judaism* appeared, in 1936, it was warmly received, particularly by adult study groups and college students who wished to know more about the philosophy of Mordecai M. Kaplan and the Reconstructionist movement. It has served, indeed, as an introductory text on Reconstructionism.

Reprinted in 1941, it continued in demand until the supply was again exhausted. In recent years, many requests have been made of the author to revise the text, bringing it up to date. The need for revision was, of course, obvious, for the intervening years had witnessed the tragedy of Hitlerism at its worst, and the triumphant establishment of the State of Israel.

The author undertook during this past year to meet the requests for a new edition by carefully scrutinizing every page of the volume. This revised text should now be clear of any anachronisms, and should correct any statistics which have become obsolete. On the whole, however, the author has seen fit to change very little. The major outlines of the presentation have withstood the years well. He hopes that the readers will agree with him.

I. E.

January, 1953.

## INTRODUCTION

THE PURPOSE of this book is to make clear exactly what it means to be a Jew. It is necessary to do this in our day because so many Jews are confused as to what distinguishes them from the non-Jews. To such an extent is this confusion felt that many Jews do not know what is expected of them, nor what they may expect from Jewish life. As a result, Jewish life has suffered; Jewish institutions suffer for want of support, Jewish movements suffer for want of devoted followers, Jewish education suffers because Jews, in their confusion, do not realize what value such education might have for them, and do not know, even when they are interested, what they ought to learn.

The problem of what it means to be a Jew is a comparatively new one. Before our time, Jews knew exactly who they were and what they stood for. Jewish life and the program of Jewish living were clearly understood. A Jew might neglect the customs which he was expected to observe, but at least he knew exactly what it was that he was breaking away from. Today, there are many conceptions of what it means to be a good Jew; no longer is everyone agreed on this question. Some say that it means to live in strict accordance with the traditional laws contained in the Torah. Others say that it means weekly attendance at the synagogue. Others, still, maintain that it is possible to be a good Jew "at heart"; that all one has to do is to live morally, not to lie or cheat or steal, and that it is not necessary to go to the synagogue. Some people feel that it is quite enough to contribute money to Jewish charities. Others feel that it is enough to help Israel.

Which of these opinions is the correct one? Why? Is there one correct answer? These are some of the questions which this book will attempt to answer. But the very fact that people ask these questions shows that Jewish life is undergoing a complete change. There are many problems which must be solved, many difficulties that must be overcome. It is therefore necessary

to approach the study of Judaism as one approaches a very serious problem. It is wrong, as so many writers believe, to present Judaism to the inquiring Jew as though everybody agreed on what it means to be Jew, and as though all one had to do was to conform to definite requirements. To present Judaism in this way is to stress the importance of adherence to specific doctrines and the observance of specific rites. What should be stressed, however, is the need for participation in the solution of Jewish problems.

These problems arose as a result of the changes that have taken place in the world at large and within Jewish life itself. These changes have been so serious and so revolutionary that to neglect them would be tantamount to ignoring the French Revolution when studying French life. If Jews are to cure themselves of the maladjustments from which they suffer today, they must do two things: first, learn to understand thoroughly the nature of those changes which have been referred to, and second, formulate a philosophy and program for American Jewish life which, reckoning with those changes, will revive the interest and loyalty of American Jews and will inspire them to joyous activity as Jews and as Americans.

The plan of this book, therefore, was so designed as to present, first, the most important political, economic and intellectual changes of the last century and a half. The questions will then be asked: Have these changes left Jewish life hopeless? Is there no chance for its survival? The answers will be given, showing wherein Jewish life still possesses great vitality, and what must be done to direct this vitality into the proper channels in order that Judaism may once again play a vital part in the lives of modern Jews. In the course of the book, the various philosophies of Judaism, which teachers and thinkers have thus far offered in order to adjust Jewish life to the new conditions, will be carefully analyzed and shown to be inadequate for the needs of our time. A new philosophy and program for Jewish life will be presented which, it is hoped, will appeal to the imagination and the loyalty of the new American Jewish generation. Jewish life today is at the crossroads. The direction which this generation takes will decide the burning question: what shall be the future of American Jewish life?

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CREATIVE JUDAISM

## PART ONE

- A. The Forces that Create the Problem
- B. The Forces that are Helping to Preserve Jewish Life
- C. Which Forces will Prevail?

## A. THE FORCES THAT CREATE THE PROBLEM

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### *Chapter I*

#### THE PRESENT CRISIS IN JUDAISM

MANY JEWS today do not want to be Jews. They consider their Jewishness a burden. They either deliberately ape the Gentiles and try to appear as though they were not Jews at all, or else they avoid all contact with Jewish life and hope that nothing will occur to make them conscious of the fact that they belong to the Jewish people. Such an attitude certainly makes one wonder what will happen to Jewish life in the future.

Do Jews feel this way about themselves perhaps because there are so many handicaps in being Jewish? Is it because of the injustice and persecution which their people suffer that they try to "escape"? This can hardly be the explanation because Jews suffered from injustice and persecution for centuries without flinching. Surely something very shattering must have happened to the Jews to make them react differently today from previous times to similar circumstances. Undoubtedly something has gone out of their life which has completely shaken their faith in the worthwhileness of being Jews.

We are often told that this faith came from their religion, and that because they believed implicitly in their religion they were able to withstand hostility. Today most Jews have given up their religion, and that is why, it is said, they are so easily overcome by antagonism. This may be true, but it does not help us to understand our problem; for we have yet to know why Jews in the past were willing to cling to their religion through thick and thin, and why today they are so ready to give it up.

To answer this question it is necessary to visualize how people in the Middle Ages thought about the world in which they lived, about themselves, and their future. At that time the three great religions shared the same general ideas about the world. They

accepted the Bible (Old Testament) as authority for their knowledge of the past, of how the world came into being and how mankind developed. They all agreed that life in this world was only an introduction to the real life for which man was destined. That real life would be lived in the world to come, and only those people would take part in the hereafter who obeyed the Law which God had revealed. In the world to come, life would be perfect and everlasting, without the troubles of this world.

The three religions disagreed, however, on the question: which one possessed the only true revelation? The Church believed that it had the way to "salvation"; they said, "No salvation outside the Church." The Mohammedans said *they* had the only true revelation contained in the Koran; no salvation outside Islam. And the Jews maintained that in the Torah they had the only authentic version of God's will. The Jews thus had a great deal in common with the other two great religious bodies, and it was not difficult for them to believe that theirs was the only genuine religion. Besides, they had the additional advantage that both the Christians and the Mohammedans admitted that the Jews were the first to possess God's revelation; (the Christians maintained, however, that the Jews forfeited their position as the "chosen people" when they rejected Jesus, and the Mohammedans maintained that the Jews forfeited their position when they rejected Mohammed). Is it any wonder, therefore, that Jews felt confident about the worthwhileness of being Jews? Did they not possess God's Torah? This Torah assured them of everlasting life; should they surrender it for a few measly years of convenience on earth?

Many Jewish teachers do not agree that the hereafter played so important a part in the lives of Jews in the Middle Ages. It is pointed out that Jews were different in this respect from the Christians: the Christians believed that the desire for worldly pleasures was the work of the Devil, whereas the Jews encouraged the enjoyment of this world. It is necessary for us, however, to try to imagine what went on in the minds of Jews centuries ago in order to appreciate how they felt about the world. They did, indeed, teach that life in ~~this~~ world was important, but *only*

as a *means* of earning a share in the world to come. Whereas Christians believed that a share in the world to come could be earned by denying oneself the pleasures of life, the Jews believed that it could be earned by making the best use of one's abilities in this world. But as far as the fulfillment of human life was concerned, they both agreed that it was not possible in this world. This doctrine was accepted everywhere and nobody thought of questioning its truth, just as today nobody questions that the world is round.

But along about 1775 people's ideas began to change. They began to believe that one does not have to belong to any particular group in order to be "saved." The will of God can be known to all men, of all groups and races and nations. All that they need do is live in accordance with the highest and noblest ideals of which they are capable. By the use of reason, anyone can live the moral life. Since reason is the way in which man can learn to know the will of God, anyone who exercises reason has the chance of attaining the "life of bliss," in whatever sense this phrase is taken.

The effect of this new attitude (which is usually called the "Enlightenment") was far-reaching. Previously, no one was permitted to be a citizen of the state unless he belonged to the Church; now that people began to believe that the Church was not the only group that possessed God's revelation, there was no reason why Jews should be treated as inferior beings. Thus Jews were admitted to citizenship in the various states in western Europe around the year 1800.

But now that Jews were citizens, many new opportunities were opened up to them in the fields of politics, business, the professions, etc. No longer were they dependent upon their fellow Jews and the Jewish community for friendship and encouragement. They were free to live where they wanted and to engage in whatever occupations they wanted. Life became busy and absorbing; and they too began to lose their interest in the world to come. They became active in the task of making the most of this world, as citizens on an equal plane with their non-Jewish neighbors.

If things had continued as they began in 1800, the Jewish people in the western world might have disappeared. But very soon the non-Jewish world began to show signs of excluding Jews from the opportunities to which they were legally entitled. Modern anti-Semitism came into being; and before long Jews found that being Jewish made it hard for them to rise to the same positions as their fellow citizens. Before the Emancipation, Jews had no civic rights, and were of course at a disadvantage; but there were always certain occupations such as trading and money-lending in which they did not meet with much competition. But now Jews were theoretically on an equal plane with non-Jews, and were hence competing with non-Jews for the same positions; and when jobs became scarce as a result of the introduction of machines and increased competition, Jews found themselves in a difficult situation.

In addition, they were being snubbed socially. In the Middle Ages, Jews were accustomed to humiliation at the hands of the Christians; now they expected respect and equality. They felt that they had a right to be treated like human beings, and were more sensitive to discrimination. Previously, insult and disrespect did not dishearten Jews. They were confident that in the end they would enjoy life eternal. As the "chosen people" they would have privileges in the hereafter that the non-Jews would not enjoy. Now, instead of being the chosen ones, they were subject only to handicaps and snubbing.

These disadvantages, serious as they were, soon faded into insignificance before the terrible campaign waged by the Nazis against the entire Jewish people. These criminals, seeking to conquer the world, proceeded to wipe out the Jews root and branch, and if they had won the war they would certainly have accomplished their purpose. As it was, six million Jews perished in the death camps. But the end was not in sight. After the war, in Russia, and in her satellite countries, Jews were consistently expelled from official positions and imprisoned. Wherever one lived, one had to pay a high price for being a Jew — except in Israel, where the Jews had, after bitter struggles, succeeded in

setting up a republic to which any Jew might emigrate at will, and enjoy all the rights of free men.

But what of those Jews who found life agreeable in the democracies, who, despite some economic discrimination and social exclusion, felt quite at home where they were? Could Jewish life have any meaning or value for them?

This is the problem most American Jews face today. Is there some purpose to which Jews can dedicate themselves, which will bring back to them something of that joy in being Jewish which their ancestors had? Is there some way of changing Jews' minds about their Jewishness so that they will no longer regard it as a burden? There is a way of transforming unhappy Jews into happy Jews, and it is the purpose of this book to explain how this can be done. But before the reader can be prepared to appreciate what is here offered, he must become better acquainted with the problem in its many aspects. He must study what political, economic and social changes brought about the Enlightenment, and how the Enlightenment in turn brought about further changes. Secondly, the reader must get some idea of the signs of health which Jewish life reveals; after all, it will be upon whatever health still remains in the body of the Jewish people that a recovery of Jewish life will have to depend.

When we have studied these things, we will be prepared to understand what has to be done to cure the Jews of this illness of self-hate from which they are suffering.

## Chapter II

## THE MODERN STATE

FOR THE FIRST TIME since Jews were exiled from their own land in the year 70 C.E. (Common Era), they are individually citizens of the states in which they dwell. Formerly, they had no status as individuals; the state dealt with the Jews as a group, as a legally recognized unit. In the Middle Ages, the Jews were regarded as a nation, and each community as a fragment of that nation. But with the granting to Jews, since the end of the eighteenth century, of individual citizenship in the state, new problems arose. Previously, Jews were expected to live as Jews; after they were "emancipated" (granted citizenship), they were expected to live as members of the state, as Englishmen in England, as Frenchmen in France, etc.

The state expects this because of its very nature. What is the nature of the modern state? The modern state is set off by certain boundaries, and it insists that all those who live within those boundaries should give first consideration in all things to the welfare of the state. If a citizen is interested in any group of people outside the state, or within the state, his first loyalty is not to that group but to the state. In addition, the welfare of the state requires that nothing shall come between one citizen and another which may affect the unity of the state, either socially or economically.

These two demands of the state upon its citizens can, of course, have no effect upon how Jews conceive of God. Citizens are free to follow their consciences in the matter of their personal beliefs. But these demands of the state apparently challenge the *traditional* idea of the future of the Jewish people, for, according to traditional belief, it is the destiny of the whole Jewish people to return some day to the land of Israel. The Jews were given

Eretz Yisrael by God, but they were exiled because they did not obey the Torah. During all the centuries Jews hoped to return, and they waited patiently for God's signal that they might once more inhabit their ancient home. No Jews, therefore, from the *traditional* point of view, can consider any place in the world as their permanent dwelling; other lands are only temporary stopping-off places. If Jews continued to accept these ideas of the Jewish future, they would have to be loyal first and foremost to the Jewish people, and this the modern state cannot accept. Jews have to choose between retaining their traditional beliefs about Eretz Yisrael and being granted citizenship. This is the first instance of conflict between the modern state and traditional Judaism.

The second instance of conflict between the modern state and traditional Judaism comes from the demand of the state that citizens shall mingle freely with one another in all walks of life. Traditional Judaism requires that Jews live a life separate from the life of the non-Jewish world. If the demand of the state were carried out logically, it would be wrong for any group to oppose intermarriage with the rest of the population.

A third conflict arises from the fact that Jews are compelled to discard one of the most important aspects of their life, namely, their civil law. According to traditional Judaism, God revealed His will to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai, and the record of that revelation is contained in the Written Law and the Oral Law. The Written Law is embodied primarily in the Pentateuch (five books of Moses), the Oral Law in the interpretations of the Written Law, and in the more detailed ordinances which are all contained in the Talmud. Now, the Torah (which is a term that includes both the Written and the Oral Law) covered the entire range of human life, and governed especially the social relationships and economic interests of the Jewish people. The laws dealing with these relationships constitute the Jewish civil law; and in the modern state, that law cannot function. As a result, the only way in which the Torah can affect the life of the Jews today is in regard to ritual matters.

Ritual is, indeed, important; and it seems even more important because it deals with the religious life. But on the basis of a common observance of ritual, Jews cannot pretend to require communal organization; such organization is needed today only for the purpose of distributing charity. Without communal organization the Jews are broken up into small units, based solely upon a common interest in worshiping in a particular way. Thus the modern state has left no place in Jewish life for its distinctive law.

In one respect, however, the state presents exceptional difficulties for Jewish life, and that is by demanding that children give first place in their lives to their general education. As a result, the children are compelled to squeeze their Jewish training into the spare moments after school, when they are tired and want to play. The effect of this arrangement is only too well known; most children are getting no Jewish education today.

These are the ways in which the modern state in its present form constitutes a problem for the survival of Judaism.

### Chapter III

## THE MODERN ECONOMIC ORDER

IN THE PAST, even the way Jews made their living was a means of keeping them together. As mentioned before, in the Middle Ages certain occupations were typically Jewish. Of these occupations, the outstanding ones were trading and money-lending. It is true that Jews suffered many disadvantages in not being allowed to participate in a wider range of activities; but this disadvantage was balanced by the sense of brotherhood which all Jews felt toward one another.

The Emancipation opened up vast new opportunities. Jews were now permitted to engage in any occupation they desired. This change in their economic life abolished the disadvantages under which Jews labored for so long; but at the same time, many of the advantages were lost. As soon as Jews spread out in the various fields of economic life, their unity was lost. Some became workers, others became employers. Some entered manufacturing, others jobbing, still others opened up large stores. Jews took their places in the various economic classes. Since the clash of the classes has become more intense, a class-consciousness has come to divide Jews.

But it is not only the clash of interests which pits Jews against their fellow Jews. Jewish workers are taken up with their immediate problems of hours and wages. And because their fight for better conditions of work has become such a strenuous one, when they have some leisure they prefer to read and talk about their economic condition, because they feel that in this way they have a chance of improving their lot. The consolations which religion offers them are a poor substitute for the concrete proposals which their workers' organizations present to them. We might even say that among some workers religion is looked upon as a means used by employers to get the minds of the

workers off their problems, and for that reason, these workers are suspicious of religion and become hostile to it.

Another reason why workers have drifted away from Jewish life is that it is quite expensive to belong to Jewish institutions, and most workers cannot afford that expense. Consequently, Jewish life is being carried on by a small percentage of the Jews. No group life can go on for long when it receives the support of only a minority of the group.

When we turn to the middle-class Jews, we discover that, although there is nothing in the modern state that stands in the way of their living a Jewish life, there is a good deal in the modern economic life that makes Jewish observance all but impossible. Jews have to spend almost their whole time making a living. The storekeeper cannot afford to keep his shop closed on the Jewish Sabbath when his competitors do not keep theirs closed. The same applies to factories and wholesale establishments. Furthermore, business brings Jews into contact with many non-Jews, and gradually the Jews begin to take over the manners and customs of the non-Jews. In business, it is necessary to take notice of the Christian holidays; Christmas and Easter are important occasions in the commercial world; and soon, Jews become more conscious of these days than they are of Jewish holidays. When Sabbaths and holidays are violated, the home life is affected; there is no longer the same Jewish spirit in the home.

One of the most vital factors in the economic life making for unhappiness among Jews is the growing economic anti-Semitism. Young Jews, going out into the world, looking for jobs, find that they are at a greater disadvantage than non-Jews. When employment agencies inform job-hunters that Jews need not even apply for certain jobs because certain organizations make it a practice never to employ Jews, the effect upon these Jews is heartbreaking. They begin to feel that their Jewishness is a curse, that it stands in the way of their making a living. Sometimes Jews change their names, or conceal their identity. Certainly such a state of affairs cannot make for a wholesome Jewish life.

These are the ways in which the modern economic order is contributing to the breakdown of Jewish life.

#### Chapter IV

### MODERN THOUGHT

THERE ARE THREE important aspects of modern thought which have combined to shake the faith of Jews in their tradition: (1) The first is the scientific aspect. Science will accept no belief on hearsay; it insists upon observing the world without prejudice, and coming to conclusions only on the basis of its careful observations. Science aims to inculcate not blind obedience, but a desire to learn the truth from one's own thinking and experience. (2) The second aspect of modern thought is the tendency to make the furtherance of human welfare the standard of right and wrong. Previously, certain actions were judged good or bad by whether they were in accord with God's will as revealed in an authoritative code; today actions are considered good or bad by their effect on the lives of people. (3) The third aspect of modern thought is the tendency to give a place of importance to the appreciation and creation of art as essential to the highest development of human life.

#### I. EFFECT ON THE IDEA OF GOD

Now, of course, not everyone is "modern"; many people have not adopted modern thought as their guide. But in general most intelligent people have accepted these ideas concerning what is (1) true, (2) good, and (3) beautiful. It is important to ask, therefore, in what ways modern thought affects traditional Judaism. When we turn to the idea of God, we find that physical science creates no conflict, for most scientists themselves admit that it is beyond the scope of science to deal with the existence of God. But the science of history does conflict with the Bible in rejecting the belief in those qualities which the Bible ascribes to God. For example, science rejects the possibility of miracles,

claiming that the stories which tell about miracles are very unreliable and are products of the imagination. The sciences which deal with the study of various civilizations tell us that many of the incidents related in our literature are also found, with variations, in the literatures of other nations; and that it is most likely that such stories are only legends which commonly grow up among primitive peoples.

The belief that the Torah was revealed by God, and that it is the duty of the Jews to obey its laws because it was revealed by God, conflicts with the second aspect of modern thought which makes only human welfare the criterion of right and wrong. Modern men and women do not obey any law as being for the "glory of God," unless it contributes to the good of man. They do not feel themselves obligated to observe any ordinance merely because the claim is made that it expresses the will of God. Only when intelligence proves it to be helpful to human life do modern people feel obliged to observe it, and if they happen to be religiously minded, they ascribe it to the will of God.

According to traditional Judaism, a Jew should be guided in all his actions by the desire to obey God's will, and to further the glory of God. Any activity, therefore, which is engaged in for pleasure, or to satisfy the urge for self-expression, is frowned upon. Thus, the modern tendency to create art, literature, music for their own sake, is another source of conflict. Jewish artists, like other artists, are interested in more than just religious art, or religious music; they want to create art and music which deals with other things besides God and His relationship to the world. As a result, they feel hampered by the dictates of traditional Judaism.

## 2. EFFECT ON THE IDEA OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The traditional idea of how the Jewish people came into being is challenged by the scientific study of history. According to tradition, all Jews are descended from the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Science rejects this idea of the Jews as a pure

race, having a common ancestry; it is now believed that the Jewish people came into being like every other people, by a gradual merging of many different clans, tribes and nationalities — a process which took centuries.

According to traditional Judaism, the Jews are chosen by God for special care, and endowed with special privileges and responsibilities. We have come to learn that the Jews are not the only ones to claim that they are the chosen ones. Anthropology teaches us that it is not uncommon for a group to have such notions about itself. As a result of scientific studies we have grown to understand what is behind these claims to superiority; but understanding them has also shown us the meaninglessness of such claims. In addition, a great deal of tragedy in the world has come from the fact that nations make these claims, and modern people are inclined to oppose all ideas of group superiority.

## 3. EFFECT ON THE IDEA OF TORAH

According to traditional Judaism, the Torah (the Pentateuch together with its interpretations) was literally communicated by God to Moses, for the benefit of the Jewish people. The scientific study of the Bible (that aspect of it known as "higher criticism") has shown that the Pentateuch is a collection of many different documents, written at various times by various authors. Consequently, Jews can no longer look upon the Torah as infallible (incapable of being wrong). They must now realize that certain parts contradict other parts, and that this is due to changes that took place in the thinking of Jewish sages and law-givers from one period to another.

In the past, Jews accepted the Torah as an unchanging law, and believed that man had been created in order to obey that law. The scientific study of the law in our day, however, has made people realize that law must change with conditions, and that it is impossible to expect people to observe the same laws today that they did thousands of years ago. Nobody today would willingly pledge allegiance to a constitution which could never be amended.

In traditional Judaism, all laws were given the same status: ethical laws were not regarded as more important than ritual laws. This was logical from the point of view of our ancestors, because, if the laws came from God, they were all equally binding. But to the modern man, ritual can never be regarded as being so vital as ethical laws.

Thus modern thought conflicts at many points with traditional Jewish ideas about God, the Jewish people and the Torah.

## B. THE FORCES THAT ARE HELPING TO PRESERVE JEWISH LIFE

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### *Chapter V*

#### FORCES WITHIN JEWISH LIFE

IF THE VARIOUS TENDENCIES that are breaking down Jewish life, described in the last section, met with no resistance, Jewish life would be ready to disappear. But certain signs of strength may be seen, as we look about us, which are helping to preserve Jewish life; and since, as stated in the first chapter, it is upon these signs of health that hope for the recovery of Jewish life depends, it is necessary for us to examine what they are.

The most important fact to be recognized is the momentum from the past which every Jew experiences. When an autoist shuts off the motor of his car, the car does not come to a stop at once; the momentum keeps the car moving for quite a time. Similarly, when the dynamo of belief in Jewish tradition was, so to speak, shut off after the Emancipation, Jewish life did not come to a stop at once; the momentum of many centuries carried Jewish life along for several generations. Thus, even if a Jew is indifferent to Jewish life, his contact with his father, or grandfather, keeps alive in him the consciousness that he is a Jew and that Jewish life persists.

For many Jews, Judaism is a habit. They may not give Jewish life much thought, but from time to time, events in their lives occur which thrust them into the environment of Jewish life. Events such as births, marriages, deaths, keep this habit alive in them, for at such moments they do not stop to think through their whole philosophy of Jewishness or anti-Jewishness. They lapse into the habits of their ancestors, and go through the rites and observances appropriate to the occasion.

Now, some people might assert that the fact that Jewish life is merely a habit for so many Jews is really an argument against Jewish life. They may say that this fact proves that Jewish life

is meaningless, and that, therefore, Jewish life should be overcome, so to speak, just as any habit can be overcome if sufficient attention is given to the task. In answer to such an assertion it should be pointed out, first, that human beings are all bundles of habits, habits of action and habits of thought. Psychologists have demonstrated that learning, to a great extent, is a matter of habit. To call something a habit is not to belittle it. There are bad habits and good habits; good habits should be cultivated, bad ones discouraged and overcome. But it is ridiculous to expect people to be conscious of every move they make and every breath they take. Habit is the essence of living. Without habit people could not exist.

Now, it may be maintained that Jewish life is a bad habit. Some Jews have actually said this. But when they have attempted to carry that belief into action, they have found that they become mentally maladjusted. Their Jewishness haunts them. The world does not permit them to break themselves of this "bad habit." Try as they will, they cannot forget that they are Jews; and this is due to the fact that the non-Jews have also developed a habit. Their habit is that of considering a Jew a Jew, no matter how that Jew himself may feel about his Jewishness.

The most wholesome thing to do is to accept the habit of being Jewish, and then proceed to *make the most of it*. Most Jews have, as a matter of fact, consciously or unconsciously, done that. One of the ways in which Jews have used this habit to good advantage has been by associating with other Jews. This does not mean that Jews are clannish; it means rather that they have found comfort and encouragement and have derived a *sense of belonging* from their association with fellow Jews. They would miss one another if they were to part company. After so many generations, they have — so to speak — grown together.

It happens very often that when a group of people share a common purpose, they grow so attached to one another that, even when that purpose no longer exists, they continue to desire one another's company and association. As a result of such fellowship and association, they develop certain characteristics in their way of living, certain institutions, and certain activities

which, taken all in all, constitute a particular way of life. Jews too have developed these characteristics, attitudes, institutions and activities which give promise of the continued existence of Jewish life.

Momentum functions both as a cause and an effect. As a cause, it gives rise to a series of activities and institutions through which Jews express their Jewishness; the effect of such activities and institutions is to add to the momentum, operating thus to help to preserve Jewish life. Following are some of these institutions and activities, together with some tendencies in Jewish life through which the momentum of Jewish life operates and helps to keep the Jewish consciousness alive.

1. *The tendency to live together.* The first important tendency that makes for Jewish survival is the habit of Jews to congregate in large numbers and to live close to one another. Consequently, large Jewish neighborhoods are formed. Jews come into frequent contact with one another. This is not due to any plan but to a desire to cling together. In some respects, it might not be such a good thing for Jews to settle, as they have settled, in the few large cities of the United States; but the effect for Jewish life has been that Jews have created institutions and organizations which reinforce Jewish life.

2. *The opposition to intermarriage.* One thing most Jews seem to agree on is that intermarriage with Gentiles is undesirable. No matter how far Jewish parents have drifted from Jewish life, the last thing in the world they would like to see is a marriage between their child and a non-Jew. And almost always the child will not marry a non-Jew out of consideration for his parents, because Jewish family life is close-knit. Strong family ties are characteristic of minority peoples generally; and the Jewish people is no exception.

3. *Jewish communal centers.* The opposition to intermarriage, alone, however, would not solve the problem of Jewish life; it might at best retard the process of breaking-down. For that reason, those Jews who have the future of Jewish life at heart have evolved a new type of institution, known as the Jewish

community center, where Jewish young people can meet socially. Over three hundred centers have been erected since 1918. Before that time, the purpose of whatever Jewish social centers existed had been to Americanize the immigrant Jews. Soon, however, Americanization was seen to be inadequate as a program, and gradually, these institutions began to aim to develop "Jewish consciousness as a means to the highest type of spiritual life."

For this new purpose, however, a new program had to be worked out. Today, the Jewish community center constitutes one of the most important strongholds of Jewish life. It attempts to unite Jews of all opinions in the common task of providing cultural and recreational activities. The Jewish community center is one of the most effective bulwarks against intermarriage.

4. *Religious activities.* Despite the widespread tendency to be indifferent to Jewish religion, thousands of Jews continue to maintain religious institutions, and to observe religious rites. According to recent statistics, there are about 3,000 congregations in the United States with a combined membership of approximately 250,000 families. These congregations are organized into three large federations: the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the United Synagogue of America, and the Union of Orthodox Congregations of America. Each federation is, in turn, part of a large complex of institutions. For example, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations is served by rabbis trained at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. Each congregation within the Union conducts sisterhoods, brotherhoods, young peoples' groups and religious schools, all associated with their respective federations. Similarly, the United Synagogue of America obtains its spiritual leadership from the Jewish Theological Seminary, and the Orthodox congregations from the several large *yeshivot*. Each of the groups organizes new congregations and schools and publishes literature that interprets Jewish religion from its own point of view.

Although attendance at the synagogue is confined, in the lives of most Jews, to *Rosh Ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur*, it is likely that many more would attend on Sabbath if economic conditions

permitted. A great number of Jews would still engage in public worship if they could, and many more would be attracted to synagogue services if those services were made more interesting and more beautiful.

At the turning points of life, Jews usually observe religious rites. Circumcision is very common. *Bar mitzvah* and confirmation are observed by large numbers of Jews. Almost every marriage between Jews is solemnized by a religious ceremony. Funerals are almost invariably conducted by rabbis, and religious rites are observed. The rites of mourning, *yahrzeit*, and memorial services are observed by many Jews who observe nothing else.

In general, it may be said that the tendency in the United States today among young people is toward a greater degree of observance. There is no longer the spirit of antagonism that prevailed a number of years ago.

5. *Jewish education.* Although the total number of children receiving a Jewish education is about thirty percent, there has recently been an increase in the number attending schools. For the most part, the schools are connected with congregations, and instruct children from the age of seven to thirteen. There are also quite a number of Talmud Torahs supported by communal funds. There is an ever-growing number of Jewish parents who are concerned with bringing up their children as Jews and who are taking the trouble to give them some kind of Jewish education, whether it be the Sunday School type of training, ending in confirmation, or the more intensive training which gives greater prominence to the study of Hebrew.

It is quite certain that more children would attend Jewish schools, and would give their Jewish studies more time, if not for the fact that the secular schools demand more and more of the American child's time.

6. *Philanthropic activities.* Jewish philanthropy is one activity in which all who want to be identified as Jews participate. Through philanthropy a sense of Jewish responsibility is created, and once a Jew has taken some part in Jewish charitable work he is more inclined to concern himself with Jewish life in general.

The large number of charitable organizations has made it necessary, in each locality, to organize Federations or Welfare Funds. These now number 250 located in 236 cities in the United States, and they work together through the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. They raise money for local charities, for agencies of social service, of recreation and education, as well as for national and overseas causes. In the years 1945-1952, many tens of millions of dollars were raised by these Federations and Welfare Funds.

As the demands for sheer relief diminish, and the need for more highly specialized types of social work grows, there will be a greater need for social workers trained specifically for Jewish communal service. They will have to have a wide knowledge of Jewish life and a sympathetic attitude toward it in order to serve their clients best. Such properly trained social workers will constitute a significant addition to the number of Jews actively advancing Judaism.

7. *Cultural activities.* a. *The Jewish press.* One of the most important factors in keeping alive the Jewish consciousness in the past has been the Yiddish press, which until recently served hundreds of thousands of readers. The newspapers printed in Yiddish contain, in addition to general news, very detailed accounts of what is going on in the Jewish world; in addition, they publish articles and stories on the various movements, institutions, and personalities in Jewish life.

The Anglo-Jewish press consists for the most part of weekly magazines, with some worthwhile monthlies and quarterlies. The scope of their contents is of course limited. But they contribute substantially toward keeping alive the Jewish consciousness of their readers.

More recently, radio and television have been employed to broadcast Jewish programs of drama, music, religious services and lectures.

b. *Literature and the Arts.* In recent years, many fine books have been published in English on Jewish subjects. Indeed, most of the classics of Jewish literature are now available in translation,

including the Talmud. Bible texts with commentaries, the traditional prayerbook with worthwhile notes, anthologies of Rabbinic literature, medieval philosophy, poetry, modern essays, history, fiction, the literature of modern Zionism — all these can now be read by those who do not understand Hebrew.

Juvenile literature, too, has developed during the past twenty years — along with juvenile books generally. Attractively illustrated and bound, charmingly written, they delight the young child.

The National Jewish Book Council has contributed greatly toward popularizing the Jewish book. Each year, it conducts Jewish Book Month, dedicated to bringing Jewish books to the attention of the public.

A similar organization, the National Jewish Music Council (both are sponsored by the National Jewish Welfare Board) encourages the use of Jewish records, the playing of Jewish compositions and the arrangement of concerts of Jewish music. Jewish Music Month is set aside each year to emphasize the important place that music should occupy in Jewish life.

During the past quarter century, Jewish music has been enriched by the work of men like Ernest Bloch, Darius Milhaud, Leonard Bernstein and other distinguished composers, both here and in Israel.

The growing importance of art in Jewish life has been demonstrated by the creation of the Jewish Museum in New York, by the increasing number of exhibitions, under both Jewish and general auspices, and by the keen interest aroused by the architectural beauty of many new synagogue structures.

On the amateur level, arts and crafts play an important role in the curriculum of the Hebrew and religious school, and adults have taken to cultivating their creative talents along these lines.

8. *The upbuilding of Israel.* The Zionist movement, begun in 1897, served, for almost two generations, as the most dynamic force in Jewish life. The enthusiasm, loyalty and sacrifice which this great enterprise aroused among tens of thousands of Jews throughout the world, was rewarded, in 1948, by the establish-

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ment of the State of Israel, and by the admission of Israel into the United Nations. In the course of the struggle to create the state, Jews in America organized many Zionist agencies. Hadassah, with its 300,000 members, is the largest organization of its kind in the world. The Zionist Organization of America, the Labor Zionist Organization, Mizrachi and many others, with their associated youth movements, created a network of active groups in every locality.

Many Jews found in Zionism, for the first time, a channel for their thought and energy. For many Jews, Zionist affiliation is their only contact with Jewish life. For all Jews, however, the successful culmination of the Zionist movement has meant an accession of pride and a source of inspiration.

9. *Secular nationalists.* Many outstanding Yiddish writers, artists and musicians are identified with this movement which originally stressed the cause of socialism but which, more recently, has stimulated Jewish cultural activity.

The secular nationalist groups have established a fine educational system, several excellent libraries, museums, and research agencies, and has set up institutions where Jews may find a congenial atmosphere in which to carry on their social and cultural life.

10. *Fraternal organizations.* For those who, coming to the New World from the Old, felt the need for fellowship and mutual aid, fraternal orders were organized, to which any Jew might belong regardless of his religious views or affiliations. In addition, the fraternal orders developed philanthropic activities: orphan homes, infirmaries, hospitals, homes for the aged, etc., were supported by the fraternal organizations. Later, when the Federations took over these activities, the fraternal orders turned to educational work. The B'nai B'rith, for example, conducts Hillel Foundations in various universities. However, mutual aid, in the form of sick and insurance benefits, still figure most prominently in the *Landsmanschaften* (fraternities in which the members, or their parents, all come from the same locality in Europe).

Another type of fraternal order is that based on a common social philosophy, and devoted to spreading that social philosophy while at the same time carrying on many of the activities of a *Landsmanschaft*. An example of this type is the Workmen's Circle.

These are the various tendencies through which the momentum of Jewish life finds expression and which, therefore, help preserve that life.

## Chapter VI

## FORCES OUTSIDE JEWISH LIFE

## I. ANTI-SEMITISM

IT MAY SEEM STRANGE that the widespread hatred of the Jews by the non-Jews should tend to keep the Jewish people alive; yet that is the case to a large extent. In order to understand the effect of anti-Semitism upon the Jews today, it is necessary to distinguish it from the Jew-hatred of the past.

In the past, non-Jews hated Jews because they were different. The Greeks and the Romans thought the Jews were proud when they refused to become like their neighbors. In the Middle Ages, the Christians would have accepted the Jews on a plane of equality if they had been willing to become Christians; the same was true in the Mohammedan world. At the present time, anti-Semitism is directed mainly against the Jews who try to act like non-Jews, dress, think and behave like their neighbors.

In the past, Gentiles assumed that Jews could be acceptable members of society if only they gave up those habits and beliefs which distinguished them from others. Today anti-Semites maintain that Jews are *hopelessly* inferior and dangerous, and that it is therefore necessary to watch out lest they filter into Gentile society and poison it with their taint.

This reversal in attitude is due entirely to the Emancipation and the desire of Jews to take advantage of the opportunities which the Emancipation offers. When Jews left the ghettos, they began for the first time to compete with the Gentiles for economic opportunities, and the Gentiles began to fear that the Jews were going to monopolize them. In order to get around this obstacle, Jews tried to wipe out every trace of their Jewish-

ness, so that they would not be detected. But that made matters even worse; Gentiles would be more careful than ever to keep Jews out, and they would investigate very carefully to see to it that Jews had no place in their economic activities.

Obviously, the Gentiles do not declare the real reason for excluding Jews; they create other reasons. The old argument based on the Jews' religious beliefs no longer carries much weight, because the Gentiles are themselves so very much divided on the question of religion and often harbor bitter feelings toward one another because of religious differences. The reasons given today, therefore, are based on false "scientific" theories of race. These theories declare that the Jews come from a bad racial stock, and that contamination by them is unhealthy and dangerous.

In Europe, these theories brought tragedy to the Jews. In America, the growth of anti-Semitism has been slower; but there has been a definite growth.

Studies have shown that the instigators of anti-Semitism have also been those who, for one reason or another, wish to attack all minorities, and are, generally, enemies of democracy. Liberal Christians and other liberal Americans concerned about the future of democracy have assisted in the struggle against anti-Semitism; nevertheless, Jews have set up several large organizations to deal with the problem. The American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League and others devote much time and energy to neutralizing the effects of anti-Semitic and anti-democratic movements.

The effect of this fight against anti-Semitism has been, in many instances, to make otherwise assimilationist-minded Jews very conscious of being Jews. Sometimes it leads them back into the Jewish fold. It is true that they are making the best of a bad situation when they return to Judaism under such conditions. But this fact does not detract from the importance of their return to Jewish life. Very often significant progress may be due to the accidents of history. The main point is that Jews have developed a renewed interest in Jewish life as a result of having been rejected by the non-Jewish world.

## 2. CATHOLICISM

As we have seen before, the tendency in the modern state is to break down group distinctions; Germans, Italians, Irish soon lose their identity and become just Americans. But the Catholics are a minority that will not yield to this tendency; and because such a minority exists in the United States, the task of Jews becomes easier. It would be much harder for the Jews to resist this tendency if they were the only ones.

Of course, the Catholics are different in a number of ways from the Jews. They have a much stronger bond of unity in their loyalty to the Church of Rome; and they have no sects or divisions within their ranks. But their situation in regard to assimilation is very similar to that of the Jews: they carry on their own educational system; they are opposed to intermarriage. Thus they constitute a counter-influence which helps make possible the survival of minority groups.

These are the forces outside Jewish life that are helping to preserve Jewish life.

## C. WHICH FORCES WILL PREVAIL?

*Chapter VII*

## NEEDED: A PROGRAM OF RECONSTRUCTION

WE HAVE SEEN that American-Jewish life is acted upon by two sets of opposing forces. On the one hand, the abandonment by Jews of their traditional ideas about God, the Torah and the Jewish people, the political order, the economic system, and the tendencies of modern thought; on the other hand, the momentum of the past, the opposition to intermarriage, the many movements and institutions in Jewish life, and the forces outside Jewish life that help Jewish survival. Since these opposing forces are almost equal in power, the danger to Jewish survival is serious. It is true that, in the past, Jews faced great difficulties; but never before have the forces tending to break down Jewish life been so strong, nor the forces tending to strengthen Jewish life been so weak.

The future, therefore, depends upon what Jews of this generation will do. The fact that Judaism has lived so long does not necessarily mean that it will continue to live on. When we turn to previous crises in Jewish life, we find that never did Jews have to face the particular combination of dangers that they face today. At the time of the Maccabees, Judaism seemed doomed; yet the Jews were then still living on their own land and were imbued with the thought that in possessing the Torah they were the superior nation of the world. In the period known as the Golden Age in Spain, Jews were sorely tempted to give up their Jewishness — and nevertheless did not; but then they could not give up their Judaism without adopting Mohammedanism. Today they can give up their Judaism without adopting either Christianity or Mohammedanism. Today the pressure to yield to the life of the non-Jewish world is therefore greater, and Jews are definitely perplexed. What they need is a program of

Jewish life which will be so rewarding and so interesting that they will be able to resist the temptations of trying to be what they are not.

In order to map out such a program, it is necessary to think through a philosophy, a point of view, which will take into account all the problems raised in the previous chapters. It is not sufficient merely to multiply activities; such activities can have no really firm foundation unless behind them there is a clear understanding of what we want Jewish life to mean to us. Most of the activities and institutions listed previously have not had their purposes clearly defined.

Some attempts have been made, however, to formulate such a philosophy for Jewish life. Most Jews are familiar with the names of these different points of view: Reform, Conservatism and Neo-Orthodoxy. What have they to offer? Are they not what we are looking for? If not, why not? These are some of the questions which Part Two of this book will try to answer.

## PART TWO

### The Current Versions of Judaism

*Chapter VIII*

THE REFORM VERSION OF JUDAISM

REFORM WAS THE FIRST attempt made to adjust Judaism to the modern state, modern economic life, and modern thought. It began in Germany about a century ago, and was introduced into the United States by Isaac M. Wise. He founded the Hebrew Union College for the training of Reform rabbis, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, an organization of Reform rabbis, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, an organization of Reform congregations.

In 1885, the Central Conference of American Rabbis met in Pittsburgh and adopted a platform which served American Reform as a guide for more than fifty years. In 1937, however, in Columbus, Ohio, a new set of *Principles* was adopted, which made certain basic changes in the Reform program. On the basis of those Principles, and on the basis of many books, pamphlets and articles written by leaders of the Reform movement, we shall be able to learn what Reform stands for.

I. THE IDEA OF GOD

In traditional Judaism, three ideas occupied positions of equal importance: the idea of God, the idea of the Torah and the idea of the Jewish people. According to Reform, the idea of God was the most important because the moral life depends upon the conception of God. Since religion is supposed to be concerned with the moral life, Jewish religion makes for the highest moral life because the Jewish conception of God is the noblest and the best. It is true that at various periods in Jewish history the God-idea changed; but in each period it was truer and better than the God-idea which the other nations had.

How do people, in general, come to know about God and His presence in the world? They used to believe that God literally revealed Himself to some great man and told that man how people should live. But (says Reform) although we today do not believe that God revealed His will in that way, we do agree with the ancient Jews that man cannot find out scientifically what is right and wrong. For the modern man, conscience is the means by which God dictates what is right and what is wrong. The result is the same; formerly, "revelation" told people to be righteous; today, our conscience tells us to be righteous. And when our conscience grows more sensitive and tells us that certain things which we thought were good before are now to be considered bad, we realize that we are getting a better understanding of God's will. If we can keep this thought clearly in mind, we should continue to use the word "revelation" to emphasize the fact that conscience is the only way in which God reveals Himself.

There is also another way of knowing that there is a God in the world, and that is by looking about us and seeing God's work in nature; the beauty, the unity and the power of nature help us to understand the holiness, unity and power of God. Of these qualities, the most significant is unity, because it denies the mistaken beliefs of other religions, like the belief in Satan or the belief in intermediaries between God and man. Such beliefs do not lead to the highest moral life. Judaism emphasizes both justice and love, unlike Christianity which does not emphasize justice sufficiently, and unlike Mohammedanism which does not emphasize love sufficiently.

Judaism furthermore conceives of God as the creator of the world. This does not mean that the world as we know it was created at one time, all complete; it means that God is constantly creating. It is He who was responsible for the evolution of man from the lower animals; and today He continues to create more wonderful and more moral beings for the future. This is the great miracle of life. Of course (says Reform) the kind of miracles described in the Bible could never have happened; but that does not mean that there is no such thing as a miracle. If that were so,

we should be able to understand everything; but we human beings understand very little. All of life, therefore, is for us a miracle.

To summarize: Reform teaches that God is one, and holy; that mankind is one; and that truth, justice and peace will ultimately be attained.

## 2. THE IDEA OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

According to traditional Judaism, Israel was the only people to receive the revelation of God's will; it is therefore the "chosen people." But since it is impossible for Jews to consider themselves "the chosen people" in that sense any longer, Reform proposes that the Jews regard themselves as chosen in the sense that they have contributed more than any other people toward spreading the true idea of God which leads to morality. After all, the religions which have preached morality — Christianity and Mohammedanism — have grown out of Judaism. Of course, other nations have made contributions: the Greeks to general knowledge, the Romans to the science of government. But these nations were not conscious of the fact that they were making a valuable contribution to the world; the Jewish people has been conscious of the importance of its contribution, and therefore deserves to be given a unique place among the nations of the world.

The chief importance of the Jewish contribution is the fact that it was made in the field of religion. The idea of God is of greater importance to human welfare than is science, art, or government. The question may be asked: since this contribution has already been made to the world, why then need the Jewish people continue to exist? The Greeks and Romans disappeared, and yet does not the world possess all that they gave to it? Reform answers that the idea of God cannot be taught merely through a book; it must be taught by the kind of life that a people lives. The Jewish people must live on in order to teach the world the idea of God. This is the *mission* of the Jewish people.

For this reason, intermarriage must be opposed. If Jews intermarry with other peoples, they will soon disappear, and if the race disappears, the world will lose the benefit of their genius for religion.

The fact that the Jews continue as a people does not mean that they are to regard themselves as a nation. The traditional idea that all Israel would return to the Land of Israel must be given up.

Of course, those Jews who live in countries where they are persecuted and oppressed should be free to join their fellow-Jews in the Republic of Israel. But in those lands where Jews enjoy the benefits of democracy they must think of themselves as permanently established. The dispersion of Jews throughout the world should no longer be understood as a punishment for sins; it is part of God's plan to enable the Jews to carry out their mission. Besides, considering themselves as a nation would tend to separate the Jews from the non-Jewish world, and that would interfere with the process of teaching the non-Jews. In order to influence the world, Jews must take their place in the world on the same plane with other peoples. From this point of view, the Emancipation was a definite step forward in the accomplishment of the mission, and should be hailed as such.

### 3. THE IDEA OF TORAH

When traditional Judaism referred to Torah it meant the Written Law, together with the Oral Law, which includes the Talmud and all other Rabbinic interpretations of the Bible and decisions of law. Torah, as we have seen before, covered the entire range of human life, and governed especially the social relationships and economic interests of the Jewish people. Reform has very little room in its program for Torah in this sense. Present conditions have eliminated from Jewish life all occasion for any kind of civic or communal authority, and therefore Torah in the old sense of the word has no more place in Jewish life.

But there is one aspect of the Torah which can and should be retained and emphasized, that is, the great moral teachings

contained in the classic Jewish writings. Those moral teachings constitute a type of ethics which no moral teachers of any other people taught. Buddhism emphasized the need for overcoming one's desires and appetites; the Greeks made happiness the goal of human life; Christianity placed all its emphasis upon the hereafter. Jewish moral teachings, however, emphasize purity, holiness, modesty and justice — and these the world needs most in our day. Although these teachings are to be found throughout the Written and Oral Law, they are most emphasized in the Prophetic books to which Reform assigns a role of great importance as a means of making Judaism a moral force in the world.

Ideas alone, however, are not sufficient to keep a religion alive. These ideas must be expressed in ceremonies. It is therefore essential to retain the synagogue for worship, and even some of the ancient forms of prayer, though changes have to be made so that whatever is not in keeping with the highest ideals of the age is eliminated. The Sabbath should be observed, although without many of the "don'ts" which traditional Judaism imposed. *Rosh Ha-Shanah* and *Yom Kippur*, with their message of spiritual revival, and *Pesah*, *Shabuot* and *Sukkot*, with their historical associations, should be retained. But not only should some of the old ceremonies be kept in modernized form; new ones must be created. Thus Reform created the ceremony of confirmation for boys and girls which takes place on *Shabuot*, and which is designed to keep alive the memory of Israel's acceptance of its mission to teach the idea of God to the world.

## Chapter IX

## WHY REFORM IS INADEQUATE

IT MUST BE ADMITTED that Reform has succeeded to a certain extent. Many Jews, who would otherwise be altogether indifferent to Jewish life, have found in Reform a way of being Jewish which satisfies them. As a result, the tendency on the part of many Jews to forget their Jewishness has been partially checked. The leaders of Reform have applied intelligence and careful planning to the problem of Judaism in the modern world, instead of permitting the Jews to drift aimlessly in search of a solution. Reform has, furthermore, made a contribution by its emphasis upon the moral teachings of the Prophets. For a long time Jews gave far too much prominence to the details of ritual, and risked the danger of overemphasizing it at the expense of the ethical teachings of Judaism. Lastly, Reform has applied the method of evolution to religion. Instead of looking at religion as fixed and unchanging, Reform has seen the wisdom of making religion grow and develop.

But the success of Reform has been only partial. Jews continue to be indifferent to Jewish life. A great deal of intermarriage still goes on. And what is most important: the children of Reform Jews are less and less Jewish from generation to generation. Even Reform rabbis have to be drawn, by and large, from the ranks of the Orthodox and Conservative Jews (Orthodoxy and Conservatism will be described later). Furthermore, Reform seems to appeal almost entirely to Jews of one class, the well-to-do Jews. By emphasizing the importance of belonging to congregations, and by having to maintain beautiful temples, highly paid rabbis, and expensive choirs, Reform has made membership in its ranks a very expensive matter.

The emphasis which Reform places on the idea of God and on ethics would lead one to expect that it would develop great

religious thinkers or ethical teachers; but, unfortunately, it has failed to do so. Most intellectual Jews have not joined the ranks of Reform. Why? Does Reform demand too much? Does it offer too little? Is it the kind of Judaism which only a select minority can appreciate? Let us analyze Reform and see if we cannot discover where its weakness lies.

## I. THE IDEA OF GOD

Reform asserts that the Jewish people has always had the highest conception of God, and has always been in advance of the other nations in its religion. On the basis of this assertion, Reform teaches that the Jewish people has a mission in the world: to teach the other nations true religion. But when we study history, we discover that this assertion is not correct. The Stoics, for example, had a very noble and spiritual conception of God comparable to that of the Jews. If, as Reform says, the Jews always brought their idea of God up to the highest level in every period of history, it follows that they must have had something to learn from the Gentiles. For example, in our own day, Reform has found it necessary to reject the idea that God revealed Himself to the Israelites on Mount Sinai, as described in the Bible. Now, were the Jews responsible for the historical science which made Jews give up this idea? Obviously, the Gentile world developed science, and Reform has had to modify its ideas about God as a result of that science. Does this not prove that the Jews have had to learn from the non-Jews?

But even if the God-idea of the Jews was higher than that of the non-Jewish nations at all times, was the Jewish people, as a whole, conscious of being dedicated to spreading this idea? Is it not true that the spiritual idea of God has been understood at all times only by the select few? Most average people, even among Jews, do not have a very exalted idea of God; many of them are superstitious; many still think of God as an old man with a long gray beard who sits on a throne. Jews are no exceptions. How can one speak then of the *whole* Jewish people as being dedicated to teaching the world?

Reform assumes that a man cannot be ethical unless he has a high conception of God; that a man's conduct depends upon his idea of God. Yet, if we look about us, we discover that many people who are atheists possess noble character; and that many people who are very pious are not worthy of respect. It does not follow, therefore, that religion makes a person moral.

## 2. THE IDEA OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Reform asserts that the Jews have a native talent for religion, that there is something in their makeup which renders them superior to other peoples in understanding the nature of God. How can Reform prove this? This assertion means that the Jews are a race, and that their genius is biological, is in the blood and can be inherited. When certain peoples show a particular talent in one field or another, scientists usually say that this is because the members of that people happen to live in the same country, under the same social and economic conditions. But Jews are scattered all over the world, and are subject to every possible variety of social and economic conditions.

If, as Reform says, the Jewish idea of God is the truest and the noblest, why should the children of Jews become Jews automatically? Certainly, if the Jewish religion is so true, Jewish children themselves will come to see that it is; but if they do not, what makes them Jews? If what differentiates a Jew from a non-Jew is the idea of God, and if a Jew becomes an atheist, or loses interest in religion, or wishes to accept a different idea of God, should not that Jew be excluded from the Jewish people? Furthermore, if Jews have a genius for religion, how is it that many Jews *are* atheists?

In addition, Reform does not give us any clear idea of how Jewish life is to be organized. If the only proper affiliation for Jews is the congregation, through which they express their religion, what shall be the affiliation of those Jews who have not yet succeeded in understanding or accepting the idea of God? Reform does not have anything to say about this important question which faces American Jews.

## 3. THE IDEA OF TORAH

Reform emphasizes ceremonies on the ground that they are necessary to make people more aware of their religion. If that is so, has Hebrew any place in the prayers of a Reform temple? Logically, it should have no place, because the God-idea which is taught is a universal one, and should be above any particular language. Besides, how can the Gentiles learn about God if ceremonies are conducted in a language which they do not understand? And yet more and more Hebrew appears in the Reform service. Is this not a contradiction?

The study of Torah in the past used to occupy the greater part of a Jew's time. Today, the child of a Reform Jewish family need spend only part of one morning a week at his Jewish studies. Is there not something wrong with a movement that demands so little education? Can there be much to Judaism if it can be mastered in so short a time? How can anyone respect Judaism if Judaism requires so little training?

## SUMMARY

After studying what Reform proposes, examining its contradictions and its inadequacies, we discover that Reform makes one outstanding mistake. It does not understand the nature of religion. It believes that religion is a set of ideas which people accept and which are supposed to improve their conduct. Reform makes religion out to be something like a list of statements which a person can point to and say, "This is what I believe." Religion is not that at all. Traditional Judaism had no word for "religion," but that does not mean that our ancestors were not religious. It means merely that everything that they did as a people — their whole way of life — was their religion. They never used the word "religion" because religion was not something apart from their lives, but was actually the quality of their lives. And today we realize, too, that religion is not something independent, something we turn our attention to when we turn

our backs upon our everyday existence. It is not something reserved for a particular day, or something which can be expressed only by certain ceremonies. Let us take an illustration which will make this point clear. We look at a white horse. The color, the "whiteness," is a quality of the horse. There is no such thing as "whiteness" *by itself*. There are white horses, white chairs, white paper. But there is no such thing as "whiteness." The same is true of religion. There are individuals who are religious; peoples which have religions. There is no such thing as "religion" by itself; it is the quality of something or somebody.

## Chapter X

### THE NEO-ORTHODOX VERSION OF JUDAISM

AT FIRST, those Jews who were loyal to traditional Judaism opposed the whole development of Emancipation and Enlightenment. They feared that traditional Judaism would suffer severe setbacks. But when it was observed that Jews had set their hearts upon Emancipation, and that, despite any efforts that might be made, Jews were being influenced by modern thought, some traditionalists, who had been trained in modern knowledge, adopted a new approach toward the Enlightenment and the Emancipation. They attempted to show that, far from being a challenge to traditional Judaism, the Emancipation and the Enlightenment could be aids to traditional Judaism. They maintained that modernism (modern thought) served to help Jews appreciate all the more the deeper meanings of their tradition. It was hoped that this interpretation of the relation of modernism to Judaism would act as a counter-force against Reform, which they regarded as a dangerous movement.

The leaders of Neo-Orthodoxy (as we shall call this new movement) took the position that the Torah was supernaturally revealed, and contains therefore the entire truth about how to live, and what to believe. Judaism, therefore, does not need to be *defended*, does not have to be argued; it needs only to be explained properly. It is not for human beings to pass judgment upon something divine. If human reason cannot understand something in Judaism, it is because reason is at fault; it does not mean that there is something wrong with Judaism.

#### I. THE IDEA OF GOD

The modern spirit must be resisted because it sets up human welfare as the yardstick by which to measure whether an act is good or bad. How can men find out what is best for mankind?

Man's knowledge is so limited that it is impossible for him to know what is really good and what is really bad. The only way to find out is by learning from God. Without the guidance of God, man would be lost. Thinkers disagree; they have various ideas of what constitutes the good life. Therefore if the masses of people are to know the good life, they must learn it from God.

How shall we conceive God? Study the Torah in its original, and learn to interpret it from its own point of view. Why philosophize about the existence and nature of God when God Himself tells us what He is and how He acts? The Torah reveals that God is the creator of all things. It is He who created nature, and decided how nature shall act. Thus the more we know about nature from science, the more we learn about God. God is loving: this we learn from the way He provides for all beings. God is just: this we learn from the harmony of nature, and from the laws in the Torah which teach cooperation between man and man.

Man was created to obey God, and by obeying Him, to carry out God's purpose in the world, which is to establish love and justice in the world. Thus obedience to God is what constitutes goodness. Goodness is that which makes man happy; goodness is that which is in agreement with the expressed will of God. What distinguishes man from the animals is this: that the animals obey God's will without realizing that they are doing it; man knows what God wants him to do. Furthermore, the animals *must* obey God; they act, so to speak, automatically; man has the freedom to obey or disobey, and that is what makes man so glorious a creature.

## 2. THE IDEA OF TORAH

All that has been said about God and man's obedience to God's law is based upon the idea that the Torah, which contains the record of God's will, was revealed by God to the Jewish people. Modern thought tends to undermine the belief in the Revelation. It is therefore necessary to repeat again and again that the Torah was revealed by God to Moses. One must have

implicit faith in the divine origin of the Torah. The question is not open to discussion, for once we doubt that the Torah is divine we must doubt whether all of Jewish history was not really a terrible mistake. We must ask whether the Sages and martyrs who died for Judaism did not, indeed, die in vain. It is futile to try to adjust our ideas about Torah to the spirit of the times. If we did, we should have to change our ideas about Judaism every time mankind changed its ideas. *The times, rather, should be adjusted to the spirit of the Torah.*

Since the Torah was divinely revealed, and since man must learn from it what is good and what is bad, it is therefore the duty of the Jew to study the Torah constantly. The Torah must be studied, furthermore, in the original Hebrew because the Hebrew language reveals the deeper significance of the text. That significance would be lost to us if we knew the Torah only through translation. However, if study is not followed up by the actual performance of the *mitsvot* (commandments), the purpose of study is defeated. Study should lead to action.

Since all the *mitsvot* are part of the Torah, no distinction should be made between ritual and moral laws. Of course, it may be difficult in the modern world to observe all the ritual laws, like the Sabbath; but Jews should not worry about any loss that may be involved in their observance. Jews should trust in God; God will not permit anyone to suffer, economically or any other way, as a result of loyalty to His law.

## 3. THE IDEA OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

According to Neo-Orthodoxy, it is for the sake of preserving and spreading the teachings of the Torah that God chose the Jews and not because the Jews were in any way superior. In other words, whatever superiority they may have is due to their possession of the Torah. The Jews are the instrument of God for the fulfillment of a certain purpose, and that purpose is to teach the true way of life to the world.

In the newly established Israel, Jews will have an opportunity to live out their Judaism to the fullest extent. Freed from the

limitations of a Gentile environment, they will be able to fulfill all the *mitsvot*. But, of course, not all Jews will wish to return to Israel; and indeed, God's purpose will be best carried out if they remain scattered among the nations, for they bear a divine message to the world. What is that message? That obedience to God's law is the firmest foundation for the security of mankind. Of course, mankind might learn this truth by itself, but only after many tragic blunders. As the guide to the rest of the world, the Jews will save the world many centuries of experimentation and suffering.

But, while the Jews dwell in many lands, they must nevertheless live isolated from their neighbors. This means that Jews should not intermarry with non-Jews; but Jews should have social contacts with non-Jews, for such contacts will help broaden the minds of Jews. For centuries, Jews lived in ghettos, and suffered. This suffering was very good for them; it ennobled them, and proved to them that character and courage are far more valuable than mere possessions. Now that Jews have undergone this discipline, they are ready to go out into the world, as citizens in the various nations, and live the life of obedience to God without interference. Now they can teach by example the beauty of life as lived according to the Torah.

Thus, the Emancipation has given the Jews their best opportunity to carry out their mission.

## Chapter XI

### WHY NEO-ORTHODOXY IS INADEQUATE

NEO-ORTHODOXY makes one ashamed at first of even complaining about the problem of being a Jew. Accepting Judaism as the direct revelation of God, Neo-Orthodoxy makes all the political, economic and intellectual problems seem petty. It belittles our reason, and tells us that we do not know as much as we thought we did. We are told not to question so much — but to obey. What God commands must not be questioned.

The modern man, however, cannot visualize the revelation of God to man. He is too much influenced by the scientific spirit to give credence to the account in the Bible which describes this event. There is too much evidence against the possibility of such an occurrence. But even if the Neo-Orthodox version of the Torah were to be accepted, serious difficulties present themselves. To give an illustration: if the Torah was revealed by God, complete, to Moses, how is it that, in the Torah itself, it is possible to discover many stories that offend our sense of what is right? Can a modern person really believe that God, the God of justice and mercy, would have commanded that the Midianites should be completely exterminated, women and children included? Would God, who is man's authority for all that is merciful and just, have commanded that a man should be stoned to death for picking up sticks on the Sabbath? Many more examples of a similar character could be quoted.

Is it not more likely that our ancestors developed their idea of God in the course of time, that in early days they conceived of God as pictured in these stories and later conceived of God as described by the Prophets? Does not this explanation really appeal more to our reason and to our ethical sense? What has Neo-Orthodoxy to say on these points?

Neo-Orthodoxy pretends to reassert allegiance to traditional Judaism, and yet it does not give to otherworldliness the emphasis which marked traditional Judaism. Neo-Orthodoxy virtually ignores otherworldliness, which in traditional Judaism was a fundamental concept. By not stressing this concept, Neo-Orthodoxy makes an important concession to the spirit of the times. If Neo-Orthodoxy were serious in its desire to adjust the spirit of the times to the Torah, it would not merely reassert its belief in *ha-olam ha-ba* (the world to come) but would actually give this concept added emphasis, because it is that concept which modernism has done most to oppose.

Neo-Orthodoxy asks the modern man, furthermore, to observe the *mitsvot* without regard for their consequences; the modern man is expected to believe that in the long run everything that the Torah commands is for the best, because it is commanded by God. One who observes the way modern men think will agree that it is no longer possible to have any ordinance obeyed merely on the ground that it is commanded by God. People insist upon knowing how any act is going to affect society and their own lives as individuals before they will consent to perform that act.

In the last analysis, the most important requirement of Neo-Orthodoxy is submission to Jewish law. It should be asked, therefore: how seriously does Neo-Orthodoxy take the observance of Jewish law? When we examine the program of Neo-Orthodoxy, we find that it has eliminated the whole civil code of Jewish law, and is content to confine itself to ritual observance. If the civil law is just as divine as the ritual law, how can Neo-Orthodoxy permit itself to forget all about the establishment of Jewish courts to settle cases that arise between one Jew and another? If Jews may surrender one part of their Torah, what should prevent them from surrendering other parts, like Jewish marriage and divorce, Jewish ritual observances, etc.?

Lastly, if Israel has a mission to perform, that of teaching the non-Jewish world, why does not Neo-Orthodoxy go out on campaigns to convert the non-Jews to Judaism? Certainly, if the very existence of the Jewish people is justified only by its possession of the Torah and its opportunity to teach that Torah to

the world, Jews should be expected not only to study the Torah and to observe it, but to be active in making Jews out of non-Jews.

Obviously, Neo-Orthodoxy does not take its own views too seriously; and if the leaders of Neo-Orthodoxy do not take it seriously, it is hardly possible that the average Jewish man or woman will do so.

## Chapter XII

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM (A MODIFIED  
NEO-ORTHOODOXY)

CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM originated in Germany, under the leadership of Zacharias Frankel, in the 1840's, as an attempt to stem the tide of Reform, which was becoming very popular in his time. This Conservatism was a modified form of Neo-Orthodoxy.

Although Frankel advised that the Jews should not rely on the spirit of the age for guidance in matters pertaining to Judaism, he nevertheless encouraged the scientific study of the past (*Jüdische Wissenschaft*), and even used the conclusions of scientific research to arrive at standards by which to judge how Judaism should rightly be lived. He emphasized the fact, however, that any adjustment of Jewish life to the modern world should concern itself only with practices, and not with beliefs.

One of the basic principles laid down by Conservatism was that no practice in Jewish life should be considered out of date simply because a large number of Jews have abandoned it; "the spirit of the community as a whole" must decide this question. But, after giving this principle thought, one arrives at the conclusion that it is so vague that it does not help anyone to decide anything. When is one to know when "the spirit of the community as a whole" has changed?; should the majority be followed, or must one wait until all Jews have agreed that this belief or that practice is no longer feasible?

Although Frankel and Solomon Schechter, who introduced Conservatism to America, were very much opposed to the multiplication of groups, or sects, in Jewish life, Conservatism actually became a distinct group and movement in the United States. During the last quarter of a century, the movement has grown considerably.

According to Conservatism, the Torah was "revealed"; but "revelation" is sometimes made to appear as nothing more than the discovery of certain truths by particularly sensitive people, and sometimes it is made to appear like the Neo-Orthodox idea of "revelation," as something supernatural. Similarly, when the Bible is discussed: the Bible is looked upon as the source of "religious truth and moral guidance"; and yet it is also considered fallible (capable of being wrong). In general, it appears that Conservatism is not concerned very much with the origin of the Bible, nor with whether it contains all truth or not. It is concerned primarily with keeping Jews loyal to Jewish practice.

But even with regard to practices, Conservatism does not take a definite stand. It has never formulated its position on the questions which people ask concerning the Sabbath, and the ritual law. Jews who call themselves Conservative vary greatly from each other in the manner of their observances; their synagogue services are not uniform. Some Conservative Jews observe the dietary laws; some do not. Some ride on the Sabbath; some do not.

For this reason, the Neo-Orthodox regard Conservatives as untraditional, un-Jewish, and even more dangerous to Jewish life than Reform. Reform has taken a definite stand on the basic ideas of Judaism. Conservatism has not, and therefore Conservatism may give the impression of being traditional, while it may really not be.

In favor of Conservatism, however, it may be said: those who are in the ranks of Conservatism still display an interest in Jewish life; they seem eager to take part in Jewish affairs and to bring up their children as Jews. From them will be drawn a great many Jews who will be interested in the reconstruction of Jewish life. Since they are not altogether committed to a definite and fixed conception of Judaism, they may be more likely to find the version of Judaism, which will be presented in this volume, suitable to their needs and temperaments.

We have thus far studied the forces that have created the need for the adjustment of Jewish life to modern times. We have

studied the various attempts that have been made to make that adjustment, and we have seen in what ways those attempts have proved inadequate. We are now ready to turn to the version of Judaism which, it is believed, will change Jews' minds about their Jewishness, so that they will no longer regard it as a burden, and which will give Jews some purpose to their lives as Jews.

## PART THREE

### The Proposed Version of Judaism

*Chapter XIII*

JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION

I

THE VERSIONS of Judaism, which have been found inadequate thus far, have based their attempts to adjust Jewish life to modern times on the assumption that what is threatened is the disappearance of Jewish religion. Each version, therefore, stresses the importance of strengthening Jewish religion. Neo-Orthodoxy stresses the importance of believing that Jewish religion is supernaturally revealed. Reform and Conservatism stress the necessity of believing that Judaism is a truer religion than other religions.

But in addition to what has already been said about the inadequacies of these versions of Judaism, this must be said: they do not touch upon a large number of issues which confront the Jews today, and none of the movements which hold out promise of helping to solve the problem of Jewish life originated in any of the versions thus far discussed. They tell us nothing about how Jews ought to feel toward the upbuilding of Israel. What should be the relationship of Israel to Jews living all over the world? Should Jews in America feel that they really ought to plan on going to Israel to settle? What kind of Jewish life should be developed there?

Nor have they anything to say about the fact that so many different versions of Judaism exist. Does Neo-Orthodoxy consider the Reformers Jews? Do the Reformers consider the Conservatives Jews? On what ground? Can a Jew who is not an active member of a congregation be a good Jew? How? Is there to be any cooperation between Reform, Neo-Orthodox and Conservative Jews? On what basis?

How should anti-Semitism be fought? Should it be fought at all? Should there be a world Jewish congress? What are the arguments for and against? What is there in the philosophies of

the versions of Judaism which we have studied which helps us to understand anything about minority rights, nationalism, internationalism, tolerance, etc.?

What should be the function of the congregation, which each version of Judaism seems to consider the most important and, in fact, the only type of organization through which Judaism can express itself? Are Jews to organize *only* in congregations? After all, Jewish philanthropy is being carried on outside the congregations; a good deal of Jewish education is being carried on outside congregations; Zionist groups exist outside congregations. What shall be the relation of these activities to congregational activities?

What have the various versions of Judaism to say regarding the course of study which a Jew should follow? Neo-Orthodoxy, it is true, insists that the classic texts of Judaism should be studied; but obviously such study would not guide the modern Jew in his desire to live a Jewish life harmonious with modern thought and life. The other versions prescribe no clear-cut course of study.

How is it that the various versions of Judaism ignored all these important questions? The answer is: they all made the mistake of dealing with only one part of Judaism rather than with the whole of it. The part they deal with is that part which makes Jewish life different from non-Jewish life. Since Jewish religion is the part of Jewish life which is most unlike non-Jewish life, they have concentrated upon the problem of how to preserve Jewish religion. But what they failed to realize was that it is impossible to have Jewish *religion* without a complete Jewish life; and that *if Jewish religion is to be saved, it is necessary to save all of Jewish life*. Not only Jewish religion is being threatened; Jewish life as a whole is being threatened. It is as though men were on a ship and the ship began to sink. Would it not be foolish to try to save the beautiful paintings on the walls, while abandoning the ship? Would it not be wiser to try to keep the ship from sinking?; would that not automatically save the paintings? Suppose, further, that this ship were, in most respects, like many other ships in ~~its~~ construction and in its

purpose, but that its paintings were unique, incomparable to any other paintings. We now have the analogy to Jewish life.

Jewish life itself is foundering. Jews do not want to be Jews. They are becoming more and more indifferent to Jewish life, Jewish education, Jewish institutions. Is it Jewish religion we want to save, this religion which, we may assume, is unlike any other religion? Yes, indeed. But it is futile to try to save the unique "paintings," while we pay no attention to the ship. Jewish life involves many things besides religion. Jews have much more in common with one another than merely religion. They have a common history; and in that history, literature, language, certain ideals of ethics and ideas of art have come down to us. We have inherited certain habits, customs, manners of behavior.

All these things form the *civilization* of the Jews; and it is this civilization which is threatened. What endangers that civilization is not only the fact that Jews are so busy with American civilization that they have no time for Jewish civilization; Jewish civilization seems to be uninteresting to most Jews. That is the real problem, and one which the other versions of Judaism do not reckon with.

## II

The various civilizations of the world have many things in common: their knowledge of science, their tools, their machines, their inventions. But there are certain things which each civilization has and which it alone has: each has its own history; each has its own language; each has its own literature, art, religion and laws. These things grow out of the particular life of each people, and belong, so to speak, to the members of that people. Perhaps an illustration here might help: Many families have things in common; they have homes or apartments, electric light, heat, radios, etc. Each has furniture, pianos, kitchen utensils, which are pretty much uniform. But each family has its own peculiar habits and ways. Each has its own set of relatives to whom it feels a kinship different from the kinship it feels to other people. Each has had certain family experiences which are unique, and

as a result, certain mementos, pictures, reminiscences, which are unique. In order to feel at one with a particular family, one has to belong to that family. A stranger might be able to understand, in a general way, what the members of this family feel regarding, let us say, their Uncle Joseph; but the stranger cannot feel that Uncle Joseph is *his* uncle.

In the same way, peoples are large families. They have their particular experiences, which their members share; their own language; their own particular habits; and although members of other peoples might understand, in a general way, how the members of one people feel about their "family," they cannot feel that it is *their* family.

Now, this does not mean that the children of a family (a real family) love their mother, and do not love the mothers of other children; it does not mean that they will never mingle with the members of other families, or that they will be loyal only to their own family. In the same way, the members of one people will not associate *only* with the members of their people; nor will they consider other peoples as enemies, or inferior.

Just as one does not choose one's family, so one does not choose one's people. One is born into it. And just as each set of parents has the right to bring up its children as it sees fit, so each people with a civilization has by nature the right to educate and influence the young. Children do not get together and discuss whether or not their particular family is the *best* family to belong to; it is the most natural thing in the world for them to belong to the family to which they happen to belong.

That is why the other versions of Judaism are so unrealistic. They talk as though Jews had to be convinced that their family was the best possible family, for fear they might *join* another family, as though it were necessary to prove that Judaism is the only true religion in the world, so that Jews might be persuaded to continue to be Jews. This is entirely the wrong approach. Judaism does not have to choose between justifying itself and ceasing to exist. It does have to choose between continuing as a vital force in the lives of Jews and persisting as a source of unhappiness and as a burden to Jews.

The Jews are not an organization; they are a people with a civilization. The difference is this. An organization comes into existence for a particular purpose. The members of the organization have that one purpose in common. If that purpose is achieved, or if it is discovered that the purpose is not worth striving for any more, there is no longer any reason for that organization to exist. If it continues to exist, because of the sense of fellowship which has grown up among its members, those members feel that somehow they have to justify the continued existence of the organization. A people with a civilization, on the other hand, does not come into existence like an organization. It has no definite purpose to begin with. In the course of centuries, certain groups living together, sharing the same experiences, speaking the same language, gradually weld themselves into a *people*, or a nation. By living, working, and striving together, they develop a sense of belonging together.

Now it is one thing to speak of a people as having a *mission* and quite another to speak of it as having a *purpose*. A *mission* implies that the people was appointed by God for a particular reason, to achieve a certain goal, and that this goal is the one and only justification for its existence. But to speak of a purpose implies that, *given* the people and its civilization, *the members of that people try to make the most of that civilization*, try to make it function so as to contribute most to the life of mankind. When Judaism is spoken of here as a civilization, what is implied is this: there are Jews; they have inherited a history, a literature, a set of customs and observances; a religious outlook; what can be done to make this complete Jewish life so beautiful, so interesting, so valuable to the modern Jew that he will be happy to be a Jew? How can Jewish life be made richer, fuller, more thrilling?

Thus, the basic difference between Judaism viewed as a civilization and Judaism viewed only as a religion is this: when Judaism is viewed only as a religion, it is necessary to show in what respects Judaism is unlike other religions, and hence superior to them; this, in turn, leads to *justifying* the existence of Judaism to Jews and to the rest of the world. Comparisons are odious

because they necessarily exalt one party at the expense of the other. Loyalty to Judaism should not be advanced at the expense of any other religious tradition. When Judaism is viewed as a civilization, it remains for Jews merely to concentrate upon the problem of how they may make their Jewish lives meaningful and worthwhile, and, at the same time, accept their Jewishness as a natural and normal thing.

In the chapters that follow, the above distinction will become clearer. In the meantime, it would be well to ask: what are the elements in Judaism which make it a civilization? This question will be taken up in the next chapter.

#### Chapter XIV

### WHAT MAKES JUDAISM A CIVILIZATION

#### I. A LAND

EVERY CIVILIZATION must have a land. In a land, people living together develop, after a while, the feeling that they belong together. This sense of belonging together arises from their social intercourse. As a result of such intercourse, they develop a common language, common customs, laws, common ideas about what is right and what is wrong.

When the Israelites first came to Palestine they were not as yet a people; they were a group of separate tribes; after living together in the same land they formed themselves into a nation and produced a civilization of their own. Although the Bible tells us that the Israelites were a nation even before they came to Palestine, we have learned from the scientific study of the Bible that this was almost certainly not the case. Thus, for example, the writings of the Prophets, the Psalmists and the Sages grew out of the actual struggle between the Hebrew and the Canaanitish civilizations which took place in the land of Israel.

The Land continued to play a very important part in the lives of the Jews even after they were exiled from it. Although they were no longer occupying the Land *physically*, everything they studied about and prayed about and talked about centered around it. When they prayed for rain, it was not for rain in Germany, Italy or France; it was for rain in the Land of Israel. It did not matter to them who happened to be occupying the Land; the Jews prayed three times a day that the crops there might prosper. Jews thanked God after each meal for the privilege of enjoying the produce of the Land — even though they were not really living there. Their prayers were filled with the longing for the Land; and on the most joyous days of the year they declared,

"And because of our sins we were exiled from our Land and removed from our country."

But aside from their attachment, mentally, to the Land of Israel, the Jews lived during the Middle Ages as though they were living practically in a country of their own. Their lives were so cut off from the life about them that they might just as well have been living in a land of their own. They were always a sort of "state within a state."

Thus it is not always understood well enough that, until the Emancipation, the Jews, to all intents and purposes, were really a territorial group. The philosopher, Immanuel Kant, actually referred to the Jews as "Palestinians." They had a common stretch of land; it was not all together, to be sure, but the various ghettos were in such close touch with one another that two friends living in Frankfort and in Rome were as close as though they were living today in Haifa and in Jerusalem, respectively. All Jews lived practically the same kind of life; they all recognized, at any one time, the same legal authorities, and they governed themselves by the same Jewish law.

But the real bond of unity was the desire to be once again a nation in their own land; and desiring the land occupied so much of their thoughts that it was equal to actually living there.

In our own time we have witnessed the re-establishment of the State of Israel and the "ingathering of the exiles," the persecuted Jews of many lands. It is too early as yet to say what the effect of the new state, and the new national renaissance, will have upon Jewish life everywhere. But one thing is certain. If Jewish life is to have vitality, the Land of Israel must continue to act as the hub of the Jewish world. The Jews of Israel are living completely as Jews. It is inevitable, therefore, that they should constitute the most active and creative segment of the Jewish people.

## 2. LANGUAGE

A language is absolutely essential in a civilization. Language marks off one group from another. It enables the members of one group to communicate with their fellows; and usually one

language is so different from another that, if all other identification marks are missing, language can be used to identify a Frenchman, an Italian, or an Englishman. If a people has a language, it is a living people. As Israel Zangwill once said, "A people that speaks is not dead; a people that is not dead speaks."

When the Israelites lived on their own soil, in the Land of Israel, they acquired the Hebrew language, and wrote a great deal of what is now the Bible in Hebrew. But with the dispersion of Jews in many lands, the fate of Hebrew hung in the balance, until Jews introduced the practice of using Hebrew as the language of prayer and of the school. Although Jews spoke Persian in Persia, and Egyptian in Egypt, they continued to use Hebrew. Thus Hebrew never became a dead language, like Latin.

Another interesting thing that the Jews did was to create their common language out of other languages; thus, out of German, they created Yiddish; out of Spanish, they created Ladino; and these dialects helped to keep the Jews united no less than did the Hebrew language.

Thus, Jews always spoke or knew two languages: Hebrew, plus one other. That other one was either the language of the land, like Spanish, or French, or it was a curious combination of that language and Hebrew. In fact, in many cases the new blend of languages became so precious to Jews that they protested very much against giving it up. But of any two languages which Jews knew, Hebrew was always the more important; in Hebrew they studied their sacred literature, which they were content to study only in the original.

In the reconstruction of Judaism for our day, therefore, language must again figure. The revival of Hebrew is indispensable in any program for the Jewish future.

## 3. LAWS, CUSTOMS AND FOLKWAYS

In the last analysis, a group is known by what it does as a group, just as an individual is recognized by his actions. The things that a group does may be called its "social habits." These

habits, and the rules of conduct which govern these habits, are created by the group life, and it is the group which, either by law or by public opinion, gets the individuals in the group to conform, to behave like their neighbors. These social habits include social etiquette, moral standards, law, both civil and criminal, and religious teachings and practices.

The Torah contains laws governing every one of these social habits; and when the Jews obeyed the Torah, and, in time of crisis, worked to keep the Torah alive, they kept in mind *all* the social habits which the Torah taught. Thus, the civil laws of the Torah, which dealt with the economic relations of Jew to Jew, meant as much to the Jews as the religious practices. If a Jew had any complaint against a fellow Jew, he would never have considered going to a non-Jewish court to settle the dispute.

One of the most important functions of social habits is to teach the growing child how to become part of the group. The Torah emphasized the training of the child more than did any other ancient civilization; and Jews were always most eager to have complete control over the early years of a child's life in order that he might learn all that was necessary for him to know as a Jew. As a result of these social habits, Jews lived their Judaism every moment of their lives.

In the reconstruction of Judaism for our day, therefore, laws, customs and folkways must once again play a vital role.

#### 4. FOLK TRADITIONS

It is characteristic of a people to justify its customs, habits and laws on the basis of certain traditions which are usually accepted without questioning. These traditions are a very important force in the life of a civilization because, by explaining various customs and laws, they lead to their preservation.

These traditions often deal with events in the past life of the group; an example might be the victory of the group in a battle, or the birth of a great hero. These events or people (*e. g.*, victories or heroes) are the materials out of which traditions grow.

Sometimes it is a certain place which has become important, or "sacred," in the memory of the group because of an important event which occurred there. If so, the people feel toward that place a certain reverence, love and devotion. Now, when the group observes certain customs which are definitely bound up with a person, place or event (we call them all by the name "*sancta*"), they naturally turn their thoughts to the life of the group, to the common history of all the members of the group, and, as a result, the members of the group come to feel a closer kinship to one another.

In early days, every one of these *sancta* (men, events, places, etc.) which the group revered and respected was associated with a god, or with gods. People in ancient times always believed that their deities inhabited the neighborhood in which their group lived, and were responsible for all that happened there. Thus all ancient traditions concerning these *sancta* were bound up with supernatural beings. But later, nations developed *sancta* which had nothing to do with gods. Thus the English people, for example, selected certain events and certain heroes in their history, and developed customs and observances which dealt with those events and heroes.

To make it perfectly clear just how traditions arise, which have as their subjects certain *sancta*, we might use several illustrations: The American people celebrate the Fourth of July; this is a group custom. The event which they commemorate on the Fourth of July is the signing of the Declaration of Independence: that event is one of the *sancta* of the American people. Thus the tradition which dictates that the Fourth of July should be celebrated comes from the love and reverence in which the American people hold the Declaration of Independence and the occasion of its signing. Another illustration: Americans celebrate Lincoln's birthday: Lincoln, the man and President, is one of the *sancta* of the American people. Another illustration: Armistice Day. This day has become one of the special days in the American calendar. Why? Because the event which it commemorates played so important a part in the lives of Americans; that event is one of the *sancta* of American life.

It is apparent that the *sancta* of a group help to make the members of that group conscious of their kinship with one another; they weld the group closer together, and hence constitute one of the most important features of a civilization.

We are now in a position to understand the meaning of religion. *The traditions of a group which center about the idea of God, and the observance of those traditions constitute the religion of that group.* Even those traditions which do not center around the idea of God have, to a large extent, the same significance in the life of a group as those traditions which do, and function as religion does.

Judaism has many *sancta*: events, like the Exodus from Egypt; places, like Jerusalem; objects, like the Torah; heroes, like Moses, the Prophets, and the Rabbis. In Judaism, the *sancta* have the same function that they have in other civilizations. How these *sancta* function in Judaism will be discussed later (see chapter on "The Place of Religion in Jewish Life"); what it is necessary to emphasize here, however, is that, first, Judaism may be regarded as a civilization because, in addition to other reasons, the Jewish people possesses these *sancta*. Second, the *sancta* of Judaism have all been religious, rendering the Jewish civilization unique; and third, that *sancta* must play a vital role in the reconstruction of Judaism for the future.

#### 5. FOLK ARTS

It is obvious that every civilization produces art: painting, music, drama, dance, etc. Many people seem to feel that the artist is a solitary figure who expresses his thoughts and emotions on the canvas, or in music, and is independent of any particular group or surroundings. This is not the case. A careful study of the great works of art of the world reveals that these works of art reflect the particular conditions of the civilizations in which the artists happened to live. Works of art have the mark of particular cultural backgrounds: could a Japanese print be mistaken for anything but a product of Japanese life? Could Dostoyevski have been anyone but a Russian? Undoubtedly every work of art bears the imprint of a specific civilization. And no

civilization worthy of the name has ever existed without giving rise to works of art.

Jewish civilization, too, has produced works of art. It is true that Jews did not develop the plastic arts: painting, sculpture, etc. But Jews did develop their own music. In ancient times every festival occasion was celebrated with song and instrumental music. Besides, when we speak of art, we must not ignore the art of literature. Certainly the Jews developed that art to a very high degree. The Scriptures are not the only evidence of their literary talent: the wealth of Jewish literature throughout the ages shows how creative Jews were.

But even in the plastic arts Jews found that they could create objects of beauty without violating the second commandment of the Decalogue. They made beautiful wine cups, candelabra, ornaments for the scrolls of the Torah, curtains, hangings, and many other things.

Thus the esthetic element of a civilization was cultivated by the Jews, and must continue to be cultivated, if Jewish life is to be made sufficiently interesting and attractive to modern Jews who seek beauty in their lives.

#### 6. SOCIAL STRUCTURE

All of the elements of a civilization discussed thus far — language, laws, religion and art — cannot come into being unless there is a group life, organized in such a way that all the members of the group are *aware* that they belong to the same group. This organization is what we call the "social structure." This organization must have authority over the members of the group, and the members of the group must be willing to recognize that authority. If the will of the group opposes the authority of the organization, there is revolution, and a new organization is set up. But every civilization has some kind of social structure or organization.

When the Jews lived in their own land, they were able to create organization which had authority; for example, for many centuries they had their own government, with a king at the

head. When they were exiled from their land, they were faced with the problem of organization, and finally worked out a type of organization suitable to their needs. They organized *communities*, with the rabbi at the head of each community. The Torah was their constitution. The authority of the rabbi was so great that, if a Jew committed an offense and deserved severe punishment, the rabbi could excommunicate him. This meant that no Jew would talk to him, or trade with him, or have anything to do with him. Besides, each community was in such close relationship to every other community that the excommunication would take effect in *all* Jewish communities.

Thus, the Jews had a social structure which made them aware that they were members of the Jewish group; that organization had authority, and Jews recognized that authority. The Judaism of the future must again have a social structure in the framework of which Jewish life can function.

## Chapter XV

### WHAT THIS VERSION OF JUDAISM IMPLIES

#### I

LIKE ALL CIVILIZATIONS, Judaism changes and evolves with changing conditions. During the time of Ezra, Judaism was different from what it was in the time of Maimonides; and that was because conditions in Ezra's time were different from what they were in Maimonides' time. It should be clear, therefore, that we must expect Judaism to be different in the future from what it was in the time of Maimonides. This is, of course, what the Reformers say; but they conclude that in our day Judaism must cease to be a civilization, and must become only a religion. According to the version of Judaism presented here, Judaism must continue to be a civilization.

In order to understand the type of changes which Jewish civilization will have to undergo in our day, it is necessary to get a clear outline picture of the various stages through which Judaism has gone in the past. There were three main stages of development, corresponding to the three main stages in the development of the Jewish religion. Although religion is only one element of a civilization, it is that element which is most typical, and by means of which we can judge the character of a civilization. By tracing the development of the Jewish religion, we can best ascertain the development of Jewish civilization. (A more thorough study of the development of Jewish religion will be given in a later chapter, "The Past Stages of the Jewish Religion.")

1. The first stage of Jewish religion took place between the year 1200 B.C.E. (before the common era) to about the year 586 B.C.E. During this time, the Israelites lived in Canaan. They believed that the God of Israel, designated in Hebrew as "Yahweh," who lived on Mount Sinai, had made a covenant with their ancestors, before coming to Canaan. According to that

covenant Yahweh would always protect the Israelites, and the Israelites would always recognize Yahweh as their God. This belief was based upon another belief, that gods reveal themselves to their people from time to time to advise them as to what course of action they should take, and how they should live.

During this period, the Israelites did not deny that there were other gods in the world; in fact, they believed that each nation had its own god. But they insisted that Yahweh, the God of Israel, was mightier and more to be feared than were the other gods. Yahweh had led the Israelites out of Egypt, had given them laws, and had helped them to conquer Canaan. The entire life of the Israelites was, therefore, bound up with their belief in this protecting deity. Their songs were about Him; their legends and traditions all emphasized His greatness and power; their laws were said to have come from Him, delivered to them by specially chosen priests and judges to whom Yahweh revealed His will.

This period is known, technically, as the *henotheistic* period; this means, the period in which Israelites believed that there were many gods, but that their God was the greatest of them all.

2. In the second period, Yahweh was no longer regarded merely as the God of Israel, but as the God of the whole world. Furthermore, Jews believed that He had revealed His will only once, and that the record of that revelation was to be found in the Torah. The Torah was the constitution by which the Jewish people lived; their ritual, their civil laws, their criminal laws, their domestic laws — all were contained in the Torah. This period is known as the *theocratic* period because in it the Jewish people believed that it was being ruled by God, through the medium of God's law, the Torah, and God's ministers, the priests. There was no distinction between the civil and the religious aspects of life. The religious authorities were also the civil authorities.

Although Yahweh was the God of the whole world, nevertheless the Jews stood in a special relationship to Him. The relationship was this: Yahweh would bring prestige and power to Israel as a means of getting the other nations of the world to recognize

that He and He alone was the God of the world. Israel, in other words, was the instrument for teaching the world that God was the King of all the earth.

These beliefs grew up right after the exile of the Jews to Babylon; and it was the Prophets who expressed these beliefs in their wonderful messages to the people. At the time the beliefs developed, Israel was in exile. Later they returned to the Land of Israel; but the marvelous promises of the Prophets had not yet come true. The Jews waited and hoped for the time when the scattered members of their people would return, and Jerusalem would become, so to speak, the spiritual capital of the world; when, in other words, all the nations would admit that only the God of Israel reigns over the world.

3. But as time went on, and the Jews were again exiled from their land, and God's promise, as expressed by the Prophets, still did not come true, the Jews developed the idea of *ha-olam ha-ba*, the world to come. Thus they entered upon the third stage of their career, some time around the beginning of the common era.

The idea of the world to come grew up because, although they had been taught that virtue was rewarded and evil punished, they could see little evidence that this teaching was true to life. Too often the wicked prospered and the righteous suffered. Was it possible that God was not just? Certainly not! The Judgment Day must surely come at some future time. When would that be? The Jews believed that it would come as soon as Israel was redeemed from exile. When that happened, the dead would arise, and would be judged for their deeds on earth, and those who qualified would be eligible to inhabit the new world which God would create. This new world, the world to come, would be everlasting, and in it the righteous would live a perfect life of bliss.

This belief dominated Jewish thinking for 1800 years, until the time of the Emancipation. The thing for which all Jews strove was to be qualified to live in this new world; and they believed that they could qualify themselves by obeying the *mitsvot* (commandments) contained in the Torah. This was the condition

laid down by God, on which Jews might be "saved" for the world to come. This belief affected the life of the Jews, their institutions, their behavior, their thinking.

## II

We have thus taken a bird's-eye view of the three important stages in the development of the Jewish religion, and hence of the Jewish civilization as well. What a remarkable story it is! No people ever had the vitality to do what the Jews did, to change their basic ideas about God and the world, to lose their land and be scattered all over the world, and not to break the chain of their continuous life. On the contrary, each time the Jews faced a crisis, they not only managed to change the form and content of their civilization; they actually enriched it. The struggle against the paganism of the Canaanites brought out the Prophets. The struggle against Greek culture made the Jews conscious of the significance of the Torah. And even in the otherworldly stage (the third), the Jews developed a version of the world to come which, although it placed all the emphasis of human life on the hereafter, nevertheless emphasized responsibilities right here in this world.

Judaism is now about to enter its fourth stage of development. What will it be like? First, it will re-emphasize the life of the here and the now, the way the first stage did. It will emphasize the fact that man can and must obey the will of God; but the will of God will not be regarded as contained in any one book or set of books. It will be discovered in everything that makes for righteousness, truth and beauty. The striving after these will be the modern version of what it means to obey God.

Second, in the next stage, Judaism will recognize that it is no longer possible for all Jews to live their Jewish lives in exactly the same way. Jews in various countries live under various theories of government, and therefore their relation to the state is not the same in all states. This will affect their social structure, and the extent to which they can live a Jewish life.

For the sake of convenience, it would be well to divide world Jewry into two different zones: (1) the first zone of Jewish life is Israel, where the Jews have an opportunity to develop their own civilization on the same terms as any other nation. In Israel alone is it possible for a Jew to live a completely Jewish life. In Israel, Jewish civilization is primary for Jews. (2) The second zone of Jewish life would include countries like America, where Jews are recognized only as individual citizens, and where Jewish civilization can be lived only as a *secondary* civilization. In America, the Jews must be Americans first, and Jews second; by that is meant that the actual amount of time and energy and thought that Jews will have to give to living a Jewish life will have to be much less than the time and energy and thought that Jews will have to give to American life.

If American Jews want to live their Judaism as a civilization, they will have to face a very important problem. We have seen how, in the modern state, there is the constant tendency to wipe out differences between groups. We know how the process of Americanization works: the immigrant is first an Italian, then an Italian-American, then an American. The "hyphen" is dropped. Now, if Jews live their Judaism as a civilization, they will have to be Jewish-Americans; they will have to keep their "hyphens." Generally speaking, Americans with hyphens are not considered good Americans; they are not considered patriotic. It will be necessary, therefore, to show that hyphenism is not only not a bad thing, but a very good and necessary thing; and that, furthermore, the Jews and any other group that desires to be hyphenated have a perfect moral right to be hyphenated, a right which is in complete accord with the Constitution of the United States and the highest ideals of democracy.

The Constitution of the modern, democratic state says that every citizen shall have freedom of religion. What meaning can this right have unless each group has the right to define for itself just what "religion" means for it? Certainly, if the government were to decide the definition of religion, it might come to the conclusion that only Christianity is truly a religion, and that

Judaism, or any other "religion," is merely a superstition, and that no one has the right to practice it. It is evident that this would be unfair to Jews. In the same way, if Jews should believe that the only way their religion can be practiced is as part of a Jewish civilization, Jews have the right to practice their religion in that way.

One of the most important things to remember about the idea of Judaism as a civilization is that Judaism must be approached as a unit, must be planned and organized with *all* its elements in mind. No single part of Judaism can be thought of as the whole of Judaism. Some people think that worshipping as a Jew is the whole of Jewish living. Others think that contributing to Jewish charity is the whole of Jewish living. Still others feel that the one and only thing Jews should do is to help Israel; others feel that studying Hebrew, speaking it and reading it are all that being a Jew means. This attitude is not the correct one. Jewish life must be thought of in its *totality*. The mistake must not be made which was made by the three blind men in the story: each one touched an elephant at a different point; one concluded that the elephant was like a rubber hose, and that was because he was holding on to the trunk; another thought the elephant was like a snake, and that was because he was grasping the tail; and the third believed the elephant to be like the stump of a tree, because he was holding the leg.

To see Jewish life as a *whole* implies that, in order to live as a Jew, one must live one's Jewishness to the greatest degree possible; one must try to be as much of a Jew as possible under existing conditions.

Now, let us see what the proposed version, that of Judaism as a civilization, has in common with the versions which have been found inadequate. The proposed version agrees with Reform in pointing out that Judaism has gone through a long process of evolution, that it has changed its form and content at various periods throughout its history. Reform urges that the next step in the evolution of Judaism should not be left to chance, but should be planned; in this respect, too, the proposed version agrees with Reform. With Neo-Orthodoxy, the proposed version agrees

that it is not enough merely to think of Judaism as though it were a number of ideals and beliefs; both insist that a certain way of life is needed, that otherwise these ideals, or any ideals, become just vague theories.

Many Jews would undoubtedly hesitate about accepting the proposed version of Judaism, because it proposes changes in the habits and customs of Jews. This is part of the general fear of change which most people have. But a civilization is like a human being; a human being either grows, or dies; he never remains exactly the same. It is said that a person changes every one of the cells of his body every seven years. In the same way a civilization must either change, develop, grow — or break down and decay. If Judaism is to live on in a healthy manner, it must grow; and growth means change.

Judaism must be viewed as a civilization for still another very important reason. There are many Jews today who have various ideas about Jewish life, and are interested in a great number of different aspects of Jewish life. Some conception of Judaism is necessary which will form a common platform upon which they may all stand. In the past, this was not necessary: all Jews believed alike and acted alike, so far as their Judaism was concerned. But today, it is impossible to expect all Jews to agree; they live in many different environments, and have been influenced by many different ideas from the outside world. To say, therefore, that Judaism consists in this particular belief or that particular set of ideals would be to exclude large numbers of Jews from Jewish life who really want to be Jews. Judaism as a civilization allows for a wide variety of beliefs and practices; what it requires of each Jew is that he should want to be a Jew, should consider the Jewish people his people, their problems his problems, their life his life. He might not always participate in that life as much as his friend, Mr. A or Mr. B, and he might not always agree with Mr. A or Mr. B about policy in this or that situation; but he would want to be a Jew, and to bind his life up with the lives of other Jews. For such a man, a program of Jewish life is necessary in which he would have a place.

Neo-Orthodoxy and Reform would both exclude certain Jews. Neo-Orthodoxy claims that it alone has the true conception of Judaism; Reform claims that it alone understands what Judaism, at its best, means. There are undoubtedly many Jews who disagree with both Reform and Neo-Orthodoxy, and who yet feel that they are Jews, and would like to live as Jews. Where do they fit in? Judaism as a civilization allows for many religious viewpoints. Orthodox Jews could still keep their beliefs and practices; Reform might keep its beliefs and practices. They could both continue side by side in a Jewish life which is based on the idea of Judaism as a civilization; there is room for all viewpoints. Just as in a family: Mother might have certain ideas, political, social or economic; Father might disagree; the children might think both their parents were wrong. But that does not mean that the family would cease to exist. They are still bound up with one another, love one another, and would still have many, many things in common with one another, things which members of other families might not altogether understand or appreciate.

Jews in our day must learn to emphasize the elements which unite them, rather than those on which they disagree. Jews have so much in common that Jewish life could be made beautiful, interesting and meaningful. But in order to accomplish this, they will have to think of Judaism as a civilization, as the whole life of the Jewish people. When they have begun to think in these terms, they will be prepared to unite their forces, check the forces that are breaking down Jewish life, and once again, as of old, find happiness in being Jews.

## PART FOUR

### ISRAEL

#### The Status and Organization of Jewry

ISRAEL\*  
THE STATUS AND ORGANIZATION OF JEWRY

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*Chapter XVI*

THE PEOPLEHOOD OF ISRAEL

I

WHAT WAS the status of the Jews before the Emancipation? They believed they were a nation in exile; that their stay outside the Land of Israel was only a temporary one; that God had caused the exile and would, in turn, cause the return to the Land. It would be a mistake, however, to describe the Jews in the past as having been a nation in the modern sense of the term "nation," because the word nation leaves out a very important element. It is true that the Jews had all the things that a nation is supposed to have (as we have seen in the chapter entitled "What Makes Judaism a Civilization"); but the Jews had more: they had the belief that God was responsible for the fact that the Jews were a nation.

Now, during the Middle Ages, every group believed that it had been founded by God. The Christians were very familiar with this idea because they regarded themselves as such a group. They admitted that God had founded the Jewish people, but they insisted that, after rejecting Jesus, the Jews had also been rejected by God. They were certain that ultimately the Jews would regain their position as God's chosen people by accepting

\*The beliefs, practices and institutions of Judaism have always revolved about three major ideas: Israel, God and Torah. In every period in Jewish history, Judaism would have been incomplete without all three ideas. These three ideas constitute the pattern of Judaism. Any attempt to adjust Judaism to the needs of our time must maintain this pattern. If one or another aspect of Judaism is omitted in a version of Judaism, that version is not in the true sense a continuation of the Judaism of the past; it is a new creation. The version of Judaism as a civilization is intended to be one which does not break the continuity of Jewish tradition; it represents a reinterpretation of the Judaism of the past. The chapters that follow, therefore, are divided into the three major divisions: Israel, God and Torah, following the necessary pattern of Judaism throughout the ages.

Jesus as their redeemer. They were wrong, but at least they had a clear idea of just what kind of group the Jews were, that the Jews were a nation in exile. Today in America, however, the Jews do not find themselves in an officially Christian country. Their status therefore is no longer determined by Christian ideas. The Jews are now part of a political state; their status must be determined by political ideas.

What then is the status of the Jews today in relation to the modern state? Reform tries to answer that question by saying that the Jews are exactly like all other citizens, except in religion; and that it is only for religious purposes that Jews have a right to organize separately. Yet if we examine the subject matter of Reform, we find that, in religious beliefs, it differs very little from that of liberal Christianity; in fact, the Reform Jew has more in common with the liberal Christian than he has with the Orthodox Jew. Furthermore, what is the status of those Jews who are irreligious; should they be read out of Jewry?

Who are the Jews? Is it not peculiar that Jews should not know what kind of group they constitute? Certainly this alone would be sufficient to make Jews want to escape their Jewishness!

## II

In attempting to say exactly what is the status of the Jews, or how they should think of themselves, it is necessary first of all to make clear that the modern state as it has been defined (in the chapter entitled "The Modern State") is not the last word in the evolution of the state. It is true enough that in the modern state every effort is made to wipe out differences and to make all citizens more or less uniform. But will the state always do this? As long as current ideas about the state continue unchanged, Jews will hesitate about thinking of themselves as a nation, because Gentiles will say that belonging to a Jewish "nation" conflicts with one's citizenship. Many Jews will agree with them too.

It is therefore proposed here that the Jews consider themselves a people. It is suggested that the Jews create a new type of

people with a national home in Israel. Peoplehood is a powerful force, and can be used for good or for bad purposes. It is like dynamite: dynamite can be used to wreck a train and kill people, or it can be used to stop a raging fire. Chemistry can be used to cure disease; and it can be used to manufacture poison gas. Dynamite, chemistry, nationalism, as such are not destructive; it all depends on how they are used. Peoplehood, properly understood, can be harmonized with the highest moral ideals of men; it can contribute to peace, culture, security, to all that man desires. What the world needs today is an *ethical* conception of peoplehood, and it is here that the Jew can not only make clear his status in the world, but can at the same time make an important contribution to the world. The Jews are in a position to set forth a new idea of what it means to be a people.

Certain ideas about peoplehood have to be changed: first, we must give up the idea that *people* and *state* mean the same things. The general opinion today is that a people cannot be considered a people unless it forms a state. What follows from this idea is: that since a man can be a citizen of only one state at a time, he can be a member of only one people at a time (since state and people mean the same). The new idea of peoplehood says: the state is a political unit; the people is a cultural unit; these two are not to be confused. In the United States, the Jews are citizens of the *state*; they pay their taxes, and obey the law, and do everything that citizens are expected to do. The Jews are also members of the American *nation*; they speak the language, read the books, and seek to contribute their share to the welfare of the American people. But, in addition, the Jews should have the right to cultivate their *Jewish* peoplehood; Americanism should not crowd out the cultural activities which they might carry on as Jews. This does not mean escaping any responsibilities as *citizens*; it means assuming new responsibilities as Jews. That is, they would belong to two *peoples* at the same time. In belonging to two peoples at the same time, they would be advancing a conception of peoplehood which is highly ethical. It is ethical because it makes it *more difficult for people to be chauvinistic*. In this way, living Judaism as a civilization in

America will help to advance the highest ideals of Americanism, for it will bring to American life the contribution of the ethical ideals of Judaism. American life will be thereby enriched.

In what way has nationalism been a force for good in the past? It is no accident that every time in European history there was a movement to overthrow tyrants, nationalism played an important part. When feudalism broke down, nationalism was being built up, national cultures were being developed in the various countries. France overthrew the domination of England in the fifteenth century when they became conscious of their nationalism. The German nation and the Italian nation came into being as a result of the war to overthrow the tyranny of outside rulers.

But like all powerful ideas or institutions, nationalism can also be a source of evil. When it is used to stir up hatred against other peoples; when it is exploited as a means of aggression; when it is used to arouse bigotry and oppression, nationalism works against the best interests of mankind. We Jews have an opportunity to make a contribution to the world by stressing the idea of peoplehood as an antidote to nationalism. With a center in Israel, and segments of the Jewish people all over the world, we can show what it means to be an ethical people.

Ethical peoplehood would stress the fact that religion, culture and high ideals are the true bonds that unite men everywhere. In addition, the kinship of Jew to Jew would not be of the kind that would make kinship between Jew and any other group impossible. Indeed, American Jews, for example, would belong to two peoples. That it is possible and desirable to belong to more than one people is still a strange and suspect idea. But if the world is to be spared the horrors of war, men must learn that any peoplehood which is exclusive, which breeds hatred of all other peoples, peoplehood that is wedded to one particular *national* state is bound to lead to international conflict.

## Chapter XVII

### ETHICAL PEOPLEHOOD

#### I

AN ETHICAL PEOPLEHOOD molds and educates the personality of the individual, teaches him a language through which he expresses himself, teaches him habits and behavior which make him a human being. The people works, to a great extent, through the family, which influences the child at the beginning. Thus the language and the habits and the ideals of the parent, reflecting the language, habits and ideals of the people, come to the individual through his life at home. Through the family, the child inherits the culture of the people, of which that family is a part. It is therefore safe to say that as long as there are English, French or German peoples, the cultures of these peoples will continue to exist, for there will always be English, French and German families who will bring up their children to understand them and to live as they live.

It follows, then, that the world will always have a variety of civilizations. To speak of having *one* civilization for the world is to close one's eyes to the realities. There is no question that the existence of many civilizations has created conflict. But a solution to this problem can never come about through merging all civilizations into one hodge-podge. The solution can come about only through learning how to arrange to have different civilizations live side by side in peace. For this purpose, the ethical conception of peoplehood must be adopted.

The question may be asked: why should a minority insist upon retaining its own civilization in view of the difficulties involved? Why should not parents permit their children to be raised on the civilization of the dominant group, the culture of the majority? Indeed, it must be clear that most Jews have already agreed that their children should be brought up in America as Americans, in France as Frenchmen. That is not the point;

the point is: should America insist that Jewish children should be brought up *entirely* as Americans; should they be influenced *exclusively* by American habits and ideas? Shall the majority have the right to prevent the minority group from imparting to its children its civilization, *in addition* to that of the majority?

If Jews were to submit to the force of the majority, and give up their right to bring up their children as Jews, they would be adding to the amount of violence in the world, and, at the same time, would be destroying one of the most important values that mankind has, namely, the right to be oneself.

## II

The most important idea that should be learned from this conception of peoplehood is that the members of a civilization have the right to transmit that civilization to their children, and that no state may monopolize the right to lay the foundations of a child's personality. The Catholic Church has always maintained this attitude; but it has gone so far as to deny the state *any* rights to the child's rearing. Jews, on the contrary, must give that right to the state, on the same ground that they demand that right for themselves; the right to the child should be shared.

The separation of church from state gave citizens the freedom of religion, but the full significance of this freedom has never been understood. This was nobody's fault in particular; the thorough study of religion did not take place until many years after the Emancipation. But now that we understand better the nature of religion, we realize that religious freedom means essentially the right of any group within the state to maintain its social and cultural life. Freedom of religion means not only the freedom to worship in a distinctive manner; it means also the freedom to develop the language, folkways and arts of a group. Freedom of religion means therefore the freedom to retain the *hyphen*.

As a matter of fact, most citizens, without realizing it, are always living in the light of two civilizations. When an American is a member of a church, he derives his political opinions, his language, literature and arts from the American civilization, and

his ethical and spiritual ideals from the church. If these ideals are to be taken seriously, they must influence their lives as Americans. Thus most Americans are really hyphenated. Most people do not understand the true nature of Christianity, and they are therefore confused about the nature of Judaism. It is necessary, therefore, to point out that Christianity had originally hoped to become a world-nation, to impose its language, literature, law and world outlook upon the whole world. During the Middle Ages, it succeeded in doing this throughout Europe. Christianity, like Judaism, covered the whole range of human life. Catholicism, today, gives us a picture of Christianity as the sole influence in the life of the Christian; in our day, the Catholics are the only group that have not retreated from their original position. They have consistently demanded that in the education of their children *they* have the primary, if not the sole, right, rather than the state. Religious freedom for the Catholics means more than the right to worship in a distinctive manner; it means maintaining the whole structure of a separate life.

Although the Protestants have given up a great deal more than the Catholics, even they insist that the state is not the "final moral authority for the citizen." What does this mean? It means that Protestants believe that people should have the right to get their education from other sources besides the schools of the state; that they are entitled to be influenced by other civilizations besides the one represented by their government. When they insist that they should be Christians as well as Americans, they insist that they have the right to observe traditions whose *sancta* come from Jewish history, whose heroes are Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus, as well as those traditions whose *sancta* come from, let us say, American history, like Washington and Lincoln. Thus, they too insist upon the right to be influenced by other cultures; and they too want to retain the hyphen.

What is the value of hyphenism? The most important value is that it prevents the danger of raising the state to a religion. If the state is given the sole right over its citizens, it can do much damage, especially if the state gets into the hands of morally corrupt individuals.

## III

To summarize the arguments of the last two chapters: We have seen that the status of the Jewish group in America must be that of a section of the Jewish people; that the peoplehood of the Jews must be that of an ethical kind. Ethical peoplehood implies that hyphenism is legitimate, and to the best interests of each nation.

Since Jews are scattered all over the world, their peoplehood must have its center in Israel. This does not involve dual allegiance; political loyalty is rendered only to America. The fact that one has a hyphen (and is a Jewish-American) does not run counter to, but actually is in accord with, the highest ideals of democracy. Freedom of religion means also freedom to develop one's historic culture; and any state that denies this freedom violates the fundamental law of human freedom, that every civilization has the right to keep itself alive.

*Chapter XVIII*

## THE UNIVERSAL VALUES OF PEOPLEHOOD

IN FORMER TIMES, Jews believed that they were the "chosen people." This belief was enough to convince them that their existence as a nation was worthwhile. Today, many Jews no longer believe that they are the "chosen people"; what then shall take the place of this belief? What will convince Jews that their peoplehood is worthwhile? It is all very well to insist that the Jews have a right to consider themselves as a people, and to live as a people. But the question is: how can we get Jews to take advantage of that right? Jews must feel, if they are going to be asked to live as a people, that their peoplehood has some value, not only to themselves but to the world.

Reformers have interpreted the idea of the "chosen people." They have transformed this idea into the idea of the mission, and have thus found a reason for believing that Judaism is worthwhile. The world needs Judaism, they say, because Judaism teaches the world true religion. In the chapter "Why Reform Is Inadequate," we have seen the fallacies of this interpretation.

Perhaps, if we look back at Jewish history, we may find some clue to the answer to the question: what universal value is there in Jewish peoplehood that will make it worthwhile? When Jews said that they were the "chosen people," what was in the back of their minds? What idea were they striving to express? They meant to emphasize the belief that all other peoples, no matter how strong they were, were not really nations in the true sense of the word. This they implied when they said that the gods of other nations were not gods in the true sense of the word. People used to believe that each nation had its god; and when the Jews said that the gods of other nations were false, they implied that the other nations were not really nations, were not nations in the sense that nationhood should be understood.

Why were the other nations not really nations? Because they did not measure up to what a nation ought to be. What should a nation be? A nation should be a force for bringing out the best in the human being. This was never actually stated in these words; but that is what Jews meant when they said that it was the Torah which made them into a nation. Why the Torah? Because the Torah taught people how to live in such a way as to bring out their better natures, their justice, their mercy, etc. Now, if a nation is not a nation without the Torah, that means that without the instrument for bringing out the best in human nature, the nation is no nation, the true function of the nation is not being carried out.

This is the meaning of the benediction which Jews pronounced when the Torah was being read, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast chosen us from all the nations and given us Thy law." Why did the Jew thank God that he belonged to the Jewish nation? — because only the Jewish nation could teach him the true way of life. Now, if the Torah is what made the Israelites a nation, let us see whether we cannot find certain universal ideas in the Jewish conception of Torah, which will help us to find universal values in the Jewish conception of peoplehood.

1. The Torah was accepted by the Jews on two formal occasions — once in the time of Josiah, and once in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. They accepted the Torah as the symbol of their collective life, of the fact that they were a people. From this we can derive that peoplehood is not merely a matter of common ancestry. A people is not formed as a result merely of the accident of blood relationship or of living together. These factors may be present in the founding of a people. But a group becomes a people only through the consent of those who constitute the group to live together, and to make their common past the inspiration for a common future.

2. The Torah is not merely a code of laws. It contains history, ethics, law, and matters dealing with etiquette. In other words, the Torah is the equivalent of what we understand by a civiliza-

tion. We derive from this that a people is a cultural group, and not a fighting unit; that its members are united not for purpose of offense and defense, but by the urge to bring out the best in themselves.

3. The Torah represents teaching, both the content of teaching and the ordinances which command that knowledge should be transmitted from teacher to pupil. We derive from this that education is the prime function of a people, and that all other functions must be secondary to it.

In view of these interpretations, it becomes clear that out of Jewish tradition it is possible to derive a conception of ethical peoplehood, one which the world today needs so badly. Is it not essential for the world to learn that there is such a thing as ethical peoplehood, which can be symbolized by *Torah*, by a library of books which contain law, ethics, history and etiquette? The Jews seek a purpose in their lives as Jews. Here is such a purpose: to demonstrate to a broken and sorrowful world that peoples will never live in peace unless they adopt this new conception of peoplehood — new to them, but old to the Jewish people. Here is something to live for as Jews: to be the living examples of the truth, that a people must work for the good of its individual members by striving to bring out the best that is in them. Only if we understand this truth will we be able to develop those economic and political forms which will make for justice and righteousness.

The individual Jew can get the feeling that his life as a Jew has purpose and meaning only if he identifies his life with the life of the Jewish people. Being identified with the Jewish people means being conscious of its past, sensitive to what it is going through in the present, and concerned with its future. In former times, every Jew was constantly made aware of the past of the Jewish people. Every time he uttered a prayer, he was reminded of the exodus from Egypt, or of the destruction of the Temple. In this way, his history was always before his eyes; but not merely as a series of events, not merely as a record of battles, or of the lives of kings. The history of the Jewish people was for the Jew

the symbol of universal values. Thus, for example, the exodus from Egypt was the symbol of freedom. And by being conscious of his history, he was conscious of these values.

Today, the Jew who identifies himself with the Jewish people, and keeps alive in his mind the significance of Jewish peoplehood and its ethical character, will keep alive in the minds of mankind the message of ethical peoplehood.

### Chapter XIX

## THE LAND OF ISRAEL

### I

THE LAND OF ISRAEL always played a vital part in the history of Israel. Jews never thought of Judaism without thinking, at the same time, of the land in which Judaism grew up. A reading of the Pentateuch shows how closely the Jews always felt themselves bound up with their land.

Abraham was the first of the Patriarchs, and the promise which God makes to him is that he and his descendants will become a great nation in the land of Canaan. The exodus from Egypt is commanded by God so that God might "bring them up out of that land [Egypt] into a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." In the song at the Red Sea, the main purpose of the deliverance is stated as that of enabling the Israelites to enter into possession of the land. On the way to the land, the Israelites are given laws. These laws picture Israel in possession of the land. The whole book of Deuteronomy deals with practically one theme: what the Israelites must do *if they want to stay on their own land*. In the writings of the Prophets, the punishment for sinfulness is always *exile* from the land. Even the second Isaiah, who pictured Israel as the "servant of the Lord," and explained the dispersion of the Jews as part of God's plan to teach the nations to worship the one true God — even he never believed that the dispersion would be permanent. He believed firmly that ultimately Israel would be restored to its land.

During the period of the Rabbis, Jewish civilization changed its emphasis from this world to the world to come; but never, in all Rabbinic literature, is there any hint that the Rabbis imagined Judaism without the land of Israel. The Rabbis wrote the prayer, "We thank Thee, O Lord, our God, because Thou didst give

as a heritage to our fathers a desirable, good and ample land . . . . Blessed art Thou, O Lord, our God, for the land and for the food." (This passage is from the Grace After Meals.)

Even during the Middle Ages, Jews continued to pray for the return to the Land. Right through the centuries (except for one century between the First and Second Crusades), Jews occupied the Holy Land. In 1267, Nahmanides introduced the practice of having the Jews of the diaspora support those who migrated to Eretz Yisrael, and this practice revealed how determined Jews were to keep a hold on their land.

The mass of Jewry, however, were not content to wait and hope; from time to time, movements were begun to return to Eretz Yisrael. Each time these movements ended in failure, but not because the Jews did not give the leaders support. The reason for repeated failure was that there was no economic security for the settlers, and often no physical safety.

With Emancipation, the Jews were granted citizenship. The question we might ask is: did the states that admitted Jews to citizenship demand that the Jews give up their hope to return to their own land? The answer is: they did and they did not. They did expect the Jews to renounce the Land, in the sense that they expected Jews to be loyal to the state, to consider the state their permanent home. On the other hand, they realized that to ask Jews to divorce themselves from Eretz Yisrael would mean to ask them to surrender the basis of their Jewish existence. Therefore, a compromise was worked out: Jews should continue to pray and hope for the redemption, but they should not *do* anything about it. So long as Eretz Yisrael was confined to the synagogue and the prayer book, they believed, it could not get in the way.

The Neo-Orthodox actually acted upon this compromise. The Reformers swung to the extreme, and officially renounced their claims to the Land. But a large number of Jews refused to give up their love of Eretz Yisrael and their devotion to it; and they refused to keep that love and devotion confined to the prayer book. These Jews understood a vital truth, namely, that real emancipation is meaningless unless Jews are granted the oppor-

tunity to foster their civilization, and that the fostering of Jewish civilization is impossible without the establishment of a national home in the Land, for it is only there that Jewish civilization is the primary one for Jews, and where it can thrive.

Israel today is the only land which can furnish the necessary environment for Jewish civilization. Judaism is unlikely to survive as a *secondary* civilization in the countries of the world, unless it is given a chance to flourish in Israel as a *primary* civilization. Of course, only a portion of the Jewish people can find a place in Israel; but that portion will be creative and will enrich the culture of the Jewish people. As a result, the Jewry of the rest of the world will feel themselves members of a minority group that is creative and culturally enriched.

## II

In November, 1917, Great Britain promised the Jewish people, in a document known as the Balfour Declaration, that the Jews would have a homeland in Palestine. When the League of Nations was formed, Great Britain was given the mandate over Palestine, and fifty-two nations of the world gave their approval to the mandate. The United States added its own separate approval. The mandate provided that the Mandatory power should be responsible for putting into effect the Balfour Declaration, "it being clearly understood that nothing should be done which might prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." The Mandatory was further responsible for "placing the country under such political, administrative and economic conditions as will secure the establishment of the Jewish National home, . . . and the development of self-governing institutions, and also for safeguarding the civil and religious rights of all the inhabitants of Palestine irrespective of race and religion."

After the World War I, the Jewish population of Palestine grew from 70,000 to 650,000. Land was drained and cultivated, swamps dried, disease exterminated, industries established,

schools and a university established, trade and commerce stimulated. As a result of titanic Jewish effort, Palestine became the one place in the world capable of absorbing persecuted Jews from other lands.

But the path was strewn with obstacles. Great Britain tried to throttle the Zionist effort by shutting off immigration. The Arab effendis (wealthy landlords) incited the masses of Arabs against the Jews, saying that Jews had come to Palestine to take their land away from them. These effendis created hatred between Arab and Jew because they were afraid that the Arabs might learn from the Jews the love of freedom, and demand their rights.

Events reached their climax when the United Nations, which took up the problem of conflicting claims at the request of the British, voted on Nov. 29, 1947, in favor of partition, and the establishment of an independent state in the Jewish part of Palestine. In May, 1948, the British evacuated the country and the State of Israel was proclaimed.

Immediately thereafter the neighboring Arab states invaded Israel. With tremendous courage and resourcefulness, the Israelis beat back the Arab armies, and by 1949 truces had been signed ending active warfare. In the meantime, the United States had moved to recognize the new state, and was soon followed by virtually every other nation. Israel was also admitted to the United Nations.

### III

Israel has already exerted a remarkable influence over the Jews of the diaspora. The unity of the Jewish people has now a concrete symbol. No longer will Jews have to depend upon uniformity of ritual for their unity. There is now room for change, for development. And Jewish life has already been enriched by the life in Israel. Jewish education, today, is indebted to it for whatever is alive, interesting and stimulating in the content of Jewish education. Jewish art and music have already been inspired by the pioneers. The cooperative colonies have

already influenced the economic thinking of many Jews. The present influence of Israel upon the diaspora is but the beginning of a real rebirth of Jewish life.

If Judaism succeeds in taking up its career in its land, it is bound to enrich the life of mankind. Is not the rebuilding of Israel one of the ways in which the Jew of today may discover a purpose in being a Jew?

## Chapter XX

## THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN JEWRY

I

JEWISH LIFE IN AMERICA is not organized. Of course, there are hundreds of Jewish organizations; perhaps too many organizations. But the Jew does not derive from them what he is seeking. For most Jews, a Jewish organization means a donation. He is always being asked to give. With Judaism meaning less and less to him, he feels less and less like giving. The impression he gets is that Jewish life is for somebody else; *his* function is merely to support it. Sooner or later, the Jew is going to refuse to give; he is going to demand that Jewish life *give him* something.

What is this something which the Jew demands of Jewish life? What is it which Jewish organizations fail to give him today? Undoubtedly, if the average Jew loses interest in Jewish life, it is because Jewish life does not satisfy something in him for which he yearns. The fact is that most Jews would be unable to put into words exactly what they want. It is therefore the purpose of this chapter to analyze what the Jew has a right to expect from Jewish life, and to describe what type of Jewish organization it is necessary to create in order to meet these demands.

1. *The sense of status.* A Jew wants a sense of status. What does this mean? It means that he wants to feel that he belongs to a group that cares about him, that concerns itself with everything that he does, that is interested in all that he is capable of doing. Organizations are created for certain purposes: worship, education, recreation. These organizations are of assistance only in those particular fields in which they operate. What Jews want is to be part of some permanent society. The American people cannot provide this sense of status for, even when a non-Jew accepts Jews on a plane of equality, he does so *in spite of* the fact

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that they are Jews. As a liberal, he is prepared to ignore the Jewishness of Jews and treat them as human beings. But Jews are more than human beings; they are Jews, and they need to belong to a group which accepts them *because* they are Jews.

Besides, so long as Americans take Christianity at all seriously, or so long as it influences their way of thinking, Jews and Christians must continue to belong to different groups — not necessarily antagonistic, but different. Jews will continue to seek their intimate friends among Jews, and Christians among Christians.

Indeed, if Jews try to seek status in Gentile fellowship, their actions are bound to be resented. They are made to feel like intruders, or as though they were trying to hide their Jewishness.

For Jews to have status, they must find it in an organic Jewish community life. There should be a place for every Jew in such a community, regardless of his religious beliefs or economic condition. Undoubtedly, the establishment of such a community will meet with obstacles.

There will be those who have a vested interest in the existing organizational structure who will oppose any changes. Others will make a virtue of chaos and call it freedom; they will be opposed to any form of organized and disciplined community life.

Nevertheless, Jews must learn to understand that they can expect to have no sense of status except within the Jewish group. Other groups may welcome them, but only to a limited degree, only for a particular purpose. When that purpose is achieved, the Jew loses his status. Jews cannot afford to permit anything to stand in the way of creating the organic Jewish community.

2. *The sense of self-respect.* In whatever Jews do, they seek the approval of the Gentile. How often have Jews been heard to say, "What will the *Goyim* say?" The lack of self-respect makes Jews very often act abnormally. They become overboastful about their Jewishness, or, on the other hand, thoroughly ashamed of their Jewishness. So long as Jews could believe that they were the "chosen people," it was easy to maintain self-respect. But having given up that idea except perhaps in

their prayers, they have swung around to believing, many of them, what the Gentiles believe about the Jews. It is amazing to what an extent Jews have picked up the criticisms of anti-Semites, and utter them as their own. It is a tragedy that Jews have actually come to believe all the things that Jew-haters have said about them.

In an organic Jewish community the rich tradition and the wealth of Jewish heritage would occupy a place of dignity in the life of the community. Jews would regain some of that self-respect which today they have lost. A well-planned program of educational and cultural activities would make Jews feel, again, that they belong to a people of worth.

3. *The sense of permanence.* Every human being wants to feel that his life does not merely include the years from his birth to his death. He wants to feel that it is somehow part of a larger and more meaningful process, that it does not completely disappear with his passing. In former times, this need to feel that life went on forever was supplied by the belief in immortality. Today, most thinking people are no longer as sure as they would have been years ago that their "souls" live on after death. And they satisfy that need today by making themselves part of some movement, or by aligning themselves with some cause, assured that even if they die, the movement or the cause will continue, and their lives will thus be bound up with something that does not die.

Thus when the Jew seeks this new kind of immortality, he must seek it through the cause or movement which is closest to him. If a Jew, therefore, wishes to feel that all that he does will not cease entirely when he dies, he must pour his energies into the body of the Jewish people. Individual Jews may die; but Jewish life can go on. And through Jewish life, the Jew will find something worthwhile giving to his children, something worthwhile working for. He will realize that if he fails to achieve certain ideals, that failure will not be a complete failure; that there is still hope that those who follow after him may carry on his work.

## II

Now in order to achieve status, to regain self-respect and to acquire the sense of permanence, the Jew of today must revise many of his notions. He must, first of all, give up the idea that he can achieve any of these things by individual effort. All of these are attainable only through cooperation with others; they are not attainable through the *individualistic* activities of any organization to which he may belong. Jewish institutions today fail to give the Jews who belong to them status, self-respect and the sense of permanence, because they split up Jewish life into many competing parts. The scramble for prestige and for financial support leads to the deplorable competition that exists, for example, between one synagogue and another.

Let us suppose that a Jew belongs to a synagogue. He meets there only those who like to worship in the particular manner that he enjoys, and those who are of his particular economic class. The synagogue is unable to give him that fellowship which can come from the sense of belonging to a permanent group. Let us suppose, however, that there are many other Jews who cannot attend services on account of their businesses, or who are just indifferent to the kind of religious worship which the present synagogues offer. Is this Jew to be deprived of Jewish fellowship?

It was imagined that philanthropic activities might succeed in creating that community sense which many Jews crave. But philanthropy has failed because it deals with only two types of Jews: those who can afford to contribute, and those who are so unfortunate that they have to receive contributions. Far from creating fellowship, philanthropy divides the Jews into benefactors and beneficiaries, givers and receivers. Furthermore, by constantly emphasizing poverty, disease, old age, widowhood, and all the other evil aspects of life, Jewish philanthropy disqualifies itself from being able to offer Jews the sense of belonging to a wholesome, creative tradition.

Recently, Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds have begun to serve the needs of the contributors, and not only those of the

poor. But as long as the major stress in local and national organizations is upon "community relations" (fighting anti-Semitism) and not upon wholesome interests, like education, religion, and culture, Jews will not be able to derive from communal activities the self-respect they ardently desire.

## III

The only way in which any human being ever achieved status, self-respect and the sense of permanence was through a community to which he belonged, and of which he was a part. *Jews need today an organized Jewish community.* Such a community does not exist. We have all that a community requires, but we are not organized into a community. It is as though we had all the furniture necessary to make up a beautiful home, but we had them all piled up in a moving van. They are not laid out in their proper relationship to each other. Our Jewish institutions, likewise, need to be reassembled according to a plan, if the "house of Israel" is not to be merely a moving van.

Following the basic ideas expressed in the chapter on "Ethical Peoplehood," we should realize that the community must really be a branch of the Jewish people. And since the Jewish idea of peoplehood is that a people should bring out the best in its members, it follows that the branch of the people, the community, must have as its purpose the very same thing: to bring out the best in the Jews of the community. This can be done by the community — and only by the community — because it can give the Jew status, self-respect, and the sense of permanence. By offering these, the community is in a position to satisfy the deepest needs of Jews.

Whatever helps people to fulfill their hopes, desires and longings, and to put an end to frustration and despair, brings those people what we should call "salvation." And when that salvation is achievable in the here and now, it may be said to be "thisworldly" as opposed to "otherworldly." Today thisworldly salvation is desired by people. For Jews living outside Israel, in a country like the United States, the community should provide the means of this salvation.

## IV

A Jewish community ought to take upon itself five different pieces of work. Each will be discussed individually.

1. *Administration.* The community should register all Jews who wish to be known as Jews. Each Jew should pay a very small fee for registration. Every Jewish organization, in order to be represented on the councils of the community, should make every one of its members register.

All funds for Jewish communal purposes should be raised by the community.

The community should provide for the training of whatever men and women it needs to carry on Jewish work: rabbis, cantors, educators, social workers, etc. These people should be employed by the community.

All Jewish marriages, divorces, births and deaths should be registered, giving each individual Jew the feeling that the community cares about his personal life, and is directly interested in him.

The community should create bureaus for the study of various Jewish problems, so that accurate information could always be at hand when decisions have to be made.

2. *Economic Problems.* The community should strive to guide Jews into occupations and professions which are as yet not overcrowded. Only by means of expert advice can Jews learn what the possibilities are for making a living outside the usual fields into which urban people invariably drift.

Anti-Semitism in business, professions, industry and education should be combatted by the community.

Jewish courts of arbitration should be set up, wherever possible, to settle disputes between Jews justly, and without resort to the civil courts.

Jewish employment agencies should be established by the community.

3. *Culture.* The community should provide education for the Jewish child, youth and adult; it should encourage Jewish literary and artistic effort.

Places of worship and places for other forms of religious activity should be provided by the community.

Bureaus of Jewish education should be created, not to impose upon all Jews a uniform type of education, but to bring order out of the chaos of Jewish education, by establishing standards of wages for teachers, standards of efficiency for teachers, supervision, advice, and guidance for Jewish schools. The bureaus of education should help each type of school to adjust its program in accordance with its own ideals; and they should continually stress the importance of Jewish education.

The community should help to organize clubs for young people. Community centers should be established for the cultural activities of the community. In these centers, activities of a general nature should also be housed. In this way, the Jewish community center could become a force for bringing Jewish life and general life into closer contact. Lectures, forums, study circles, libraries, exhibitions of Jewish art, etc., should be the instruments by means of which the centers should help to bring out all that is best in Jews.

The communities should arrange mass celebrations for the holidays and festivals, so that the entire community may observe these occasions together in the spirit of unity and fellowship.

4. *Social Service.* Most of the activities which are now the main concern of the Federations of charities should be part of the work of the community. In addition, the community should take charge of all work for overseas aid.

The community should organize support for Israel.

5. *Political Problems.* The combatting of anti-Semitism (in other than economic fields) comes under this heading as one of the important functions of the community. At present, many organizations are fighting anti-Semitism; but under a community, the work would not suffer from duplication.

The community should also see to it that false Jewish issues should not be injected into the political life of the American people.

## v

The idea of the community is bound to arouse some opposition from those Jews who will feel that the program, outlined in this chapter, for the establishment of Jewish communities, would lead the Jew back into the ghetto. There is no basis for this fear: American Jews are neither able nor willing to separate themselves off from the rest of the population. They want to vote at the same polls, speak the same language, attend the same schools and colleges. They want to identify themselves fully with the civic life of the nation. They are too intimately bound up with America to consider seriously the thought of living apart.

As a matter of fact, the community would succeed in destroying the only ghetto that could, and does, exist, namely, the ghetto which is a state of mind. That ghetto is inhabited by those Jews who try to be Gentiles. These Jews hate themselves; they have no self-respect, no sense of status. They suffer from a terrible Jewish inferiority complex. These Jews could be emancipated from this "ghetto" by a community that would offer them a full, rich and interesting life as Jews.

No other ghetto exists, and no other ghetto can exist so long as we live under the present conditions of American life. If a real ghetto ever comes into being, however, it will not be because a Jewish community has been organized; only political and economic forces beyond the control of Jews might create it.

**PART FIVE**

**GOD**

The Development of the Jewish Religion

GOD  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JEWISH RELIGION

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*Chapter XXI*

NEEDED: A NEW APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM  
OF RELIGION

CAN ONE BE A GOOD JEW if one has no interest whatever in religion? From the point of view of Reform and Neo-Orthodoxy, this is impossible. Judaism, for them, is a religion, and a religion only. It is, therefore, unthinkable that a Jew without religion can be a good Jew — or a Jew at all, for that matter. The question has some point, however, if Judaism is regarded as a civilization. Everyone assumes, for example, that a person can be a Frenchman, or an Englishman without professing any religion. Does this mean that one can be a Jew without professing any religion?

It is true that modern states have divorced themselves from religion. No modern democratic state forces its citizens to belong to some particular religion. They regard religion as a private matter, to be decided by each citizen according to his own conscience. But this neutral attitude toward religion does not throw any light upon the question: what is the relation of a *civilization* to religion? This question is important, because, in the past, every civilization found expression in religion. Will religion no longer play a part in the life of civilization? It is really a private matter?

When we observe what is happening in the world about us, we realize that the traditional religions are losing their hold on people. But that does not mean that civilizations in the future will be without religion. *Modern civilizations will have religions, but they will be different from the traditional religions.* In order fully to understand this answer to the questions asked above, we must realize that it is possible to have religion without be-

lieving that it originated in a supernatural manner. This involves a revolution in all our thinking with regard to religion. Religion today must be approached in the same spirit in which science is approached. Science does not believe that it has the final truth of the physical world. Scientists believe that they are gradually *discovering* the truth, that the process of discovering the truth is a long and difficult process, which will end only when science has learned all that there is to know. This may never happen.

In the same way, people interested in religion must understand that religion does not give them the final truth about the meaning of human life (or what we call the knowledge of God), but that they are constantly searching for that truth. Our knowledge of what God means is always growing. This growth is due to the fact that people are always growing, developing, becoming more aware of the world about them. People learn everything by experience; both science and the knowledge of God come from experience.

So long as a religion claims that it possesses the whole truth it will always conflict with science. The familiar conflict between religion and science is due to the fact that religionists have been claiming to know all that there is to know about God, man, and the world. If religionists knew more about religion itself, they would realize that religions have changed and developed in the course of centuries. They would, furthermore, discover that, basically, all religions have sought to make man feel at home in the world, to adjust himself wholesomely to those conditions in the world which are beyond his control. A study of religions reveals that men's ideas about God are the outcome of their will to make the most of their lives.

In affirming the existence of God, they affirm that there is something about the world which makes for life's worthwhileness. As time goes on, men learn more and more what must be done in order to cooperate with this force that makes life worthwhile, and as that knowledge increases, man's conception of God is revised.

Thus religion must be understood as changing and growing, but, basically, always the attempt to gear human life to the forces

that make for life's worthwhileness. Man's knowledge of God is constantly increasing. Religion, therefore, must not be regarded as fixed and complete, but as an evolving process.

With this new approach to the problem of religion, we may now turn to the question asked at the beginning of this chapter: what is the place of religion in Jewish life?

## Chapter XXII

## THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN JEWISH LIFE

## I

BEFORE DESCRIBING what place religion must have in Jewish life, it is well to note how the various versions of Judaism view the question. For the sake of clarity, their positions will be presented in outline form:

*A. The Neo-Orthodox.* 1. Jews possess a Written and Oral Torah, revealed to their ancestors at Mount Sinai by God through Moses.

2. True religion can be learned only through this Torah.

3. Jews must therefore cultivate this religion. Only the study of Torah, and living in accordance with the Torah, makes a Jew a Jew.

*B. Reform.* 1. In the past the Jews possessed a national life and a unique religion.

2. The national life was bound up with Palestine.

3. The religion which dealt with man's relation to God and to his fellow man was the religion of ethical-monotheism (belief in one God as the basis of morality).

4. Today, the national life of the Jew must be given up, as a result of the Emancipation; and only Jewish religion should be retained.

5. What makes a Jew a Jew today, therefore, is adherence to the religion of ethical-monotheism.

*C. The Secular-Culturists* agree with Reform in points 1, 2 and 3, but draw the following conclusions:

4. The Enlightenment has taught us that religion should be left entirely to individual choice, and therefore the Jews as a group should devote themselves solely to cultivating their national life.

5. What makes a Jew a Jew, therefore, is participation in the national life of the Jewish people.

*D. Judaism as a Civilization* (the attitude taken in this book) agrees also with Reform on the first three points, but draws the following conclusions:

4. Religion and national-cultural life are so bound up with each other that it is impossible for one to function without the other.

5. The Emancipation and the Enlightenment have made it necessary to modify both the national-cultural life and religion.

6. What makes a Jew a Jew, therefore, is his participation in the life of the Jewish people, which is cultivated as a *religious civilization*.

## II

The outline may be interpreted as follows: Neo-Orthodoxy differs from the other three groups by believing that Jewish religion originated in a supernatural manner. The Jews were selected by God to receive His revelation, and they were the ones to carry God's message to the world.

Behind these beliefs of Neo-Orthodoxy is the assumption that the world is divided into the natural and the supernatural. This assumption creates a difficulty for the modern man, because he cannot accept that distinction; but he need not feel that, by doing so, he cuts himself off from religion. Why that is so will become clear later.

The Greek philosophers developed the idea that all things happen of themselves, automatically, so to speak. A tree grows because it is in the *nature* of trees to grow. Cows give milk because it is the *nature* of cows to give milk. There was, according to the Greeks, no outside force at work; the gods had nothing to do with these *natural* events. Once in a while, they interfered in the events of men; and what happened then was *supernatural*. But the Greek philosophers never took these *supernatural* events seriously; they regarded all stories which told about such events as myths. For them all things were *natural*.

Now, when the Jewish philosophers tried to show that there was no conflict between Jewish religion and the philosophy of the Greeks, they introduced the idea of *natural* and *supernatural*. They admitted that most events are natural; but they maintained that God had created *nature*, and, therefore, nature itself was the work of God, and they insisted that sometimes God breaks the laws of nature in order to impress man with His godhood.

In our day, thinkers no longer accept the distinction between natural and supernatural; but, at the same time, they are not willing to say that all things happen automatically. There is something *more* to life; life is more than a mere mechanism. Especially in man is there this *plus*, this something more, which cannot be accounted for by sheer mechanism. Perhaps Jews in ancient times were really groping to express this idea that man was somehow different from all other creations when they said that man was "created in the image of God."

Modern religion therefore must be based on the idea that man himself possesses those powers which, previously, people could imagine as existing only in some outside being. And by knowing more and more about himself, man learns more and more about this *plus*. Besides, when man realizes that he is no mere mechanism, he comes to see that the rest of life, too, is no mere mechanism, and he can learn to discover those elements in life which reveal this *plus*. Those elements in the world and in himself he calls God, and, therefore, when the modern man takes exception to the assumption of Neo-Orthodoxy, he need not cut himself off from religion.

Many people might object to this conception of God; they might feel that this conception analyzes God away. When God was conceived of as a Being somewhere out in space, it was easy to understand what God meant. But when God is conceived as those elements in life — in the individual, in nature, in history, in society — which cannot be measured scientifically, but which make for the richer, fuller and more satisfying life, it is not so easy to understand what God means. This is true enough; but the difficulty of conceiving of God is not a new problem which men must face. When people worshiped idols, they could not

understand what the Prophets meant by God, when God was described as an invisible Being. The Greeks and the Romans thought the Jews were atheists, because there was no image in the Temple in Jerusalem. In those days, if a god could not be seen and touched, he was not recognized as existing. It was just as hard to accustom the mind to the idea of an invisible deity then as it will be difficult to conceive of God today as the life of the universe.

The question which must now be asked is this: what are the elements in experience which lead men to know that there is a God? The answer is: those elements which make men feel that life is worthwhile. What gives men greatest assurance that life is worthwhile is the belief that the ideals and hopes which they cherish *can be realized*. People are assured that certain ideals can be realized when they learn that they have been realized in the past, at least to a certain extent. An illustration may help here: before men first tried to learn how to fly they had no idea that this feat could be accomplished at all. Then two men, the Wright brothers, actually did fly in a machine. These two men became heroes in the field of aviation; they became heroes not only because they accomplished a wonderful thing. More wonderful things have been accomplished since then. They became heroes because they showed that it *could be done*. Now whenever aviators face a difficult problem, and get to the point where they feel that, perhaps, they will never succeed in solving their problem, they think back upon these two men, and they are encouraged, inspired to go ahead. These two men are heroes: their names, their achievement, the date and place of their achievement have become a source of strength and inspiration. They have become symbols of the endless possibilities of aviation.

Religion, too, has its heroes, its places, its events which stand out from among all the people, places and events of history. Why? Because these people, places and events are associated with the realization of some of the most cherished hopes in the life of the group, and have therefore become symbols of the endless possibilities of life itself for the attainment of ideals. These have been described, in a previous chapter, as *sancta*; they have

become sacred in the life of groups, because these groups have drawn strength and inspiration from them. By remembering them, groups have not yielded to despair; these *sancta* have saved groups from giving up hope of the realization of their ideals.

Now, different groups might have different ideals. One group might aspire to power. Another group might consider power evil. But, on the whole, it is surprising to what an extent the ideals of various groups agree. The things they consider good and the things they consider evil, in other words their *ethics*, do not differ very much from one another. But the people, events, and places which they consider holy, their *sancta*, from which they derive the inspiration to live their ethics — these must necessarily be altogether different, because each group derives its *sancta* from its own history. Since each group has had a different background and different experience, the *sancta* are different.

Now we are in a position to understand what makes one religion different from another. The *sancta*, the places, events and people, which a group holds up as sacred, constitute the elements of a religion. The outstanding characteristic of any religion is its sense of holiness: when a group treats its *sancta* as sacred or holy, it is practicing its group religion. What distinguishes one religion from another, therefore, is the fact that one religion has one set of *sancta*, and another religion has another set of *sancta*. Among the major religions of mankind, the ideals which these *sancta* represent are pretty much alike.

### III

We are perhaps ready now to understand, too, the difference between early Reform, Secular-Nationalism and religio-culturism (namely, the attitude defended in this book). Early Reform believed that it was possible to separate off religion from the national life. This is impossible. The religion of a group is inextricably bound up with the experience and history of the group. The *sancta* of a group religion are selected from the national history, and cannot function apart from that history.

What Reform was really fostering was an academic religious philosophy; for without a people there can be no functioning religion. Only a religious philosophy can exist without a people. That is why Reform, to be consistent with its observance of Sabbath, festivals, etc. reaffirmed the principle of Peoplehood.

The Secular-Nationalists, on the other hand, wish to maintain the group life without religion. Their point is, that religion is a private matter. Yet they, too, have developed a group religion without realizing that they have done it. Indeed, they are even wrong when they point to modern nations, and say that these nations are without religion. This is not so. Modern nations are developing their own religions, because they are only following the natural course of events. Any group that lives together and works together develops a history, and out of that history selects those people, places and events which stand out as having contributed most to its life, and which therefore give it inspiration. The fact, for example, that the traditional religions are losing out in America does not mean that Americans have become less religious. It means rather that Americans are developing *sancta* of their own, and that the *sancta* of Christianity are losing their appeal. What are the *sancta* of American life? To mention only a few, Washington, Valley Forge, Liberty Bell, Fourth of July, Abraham Lincoln, Thanksgiving Day, Armistice Day, etc. These are the elements out of which will develop a full-fledged American religion.

In the same way, Secular-Nationalists have their heroes, their events and places which they consider sacred and which they revere, and from which they derive their inspiration. To the extent to which Secular-Nationalists take the content of their life from the history of the Jewish people, they have Jewish religion, whether they call it by that name or not. The most important thing to remember is that, like all group life, Secular-Nationalist group life is bound to develop collective religion.

If then, Jewish life will have religion, will it be the kind of religion that the modern Jew can find satisfying, through which he can really express his highest ideals? In order to be able to offer the modern Jew such a satisfying religion, it is necessary

so to interpret the *sancta* of the Jewish people as to make them function as the inspiration to the best kind of life. Jewish religion must bring out the best in the Jew.

Can there ever be one universal religion? The answer should be clear: just as there can never be one universal nation, so it is logically absurd to expect that there will ever be one universal religion. Historical religions will always have a certain unity based on their common task of expressing the worthwhileness and significance of human life; but they will also have diversity insofar as different *sancta* will be used by different groups as the symbols of life's worthwhileness.

#### SUPPLEMENT

##### *The Meaning of Religious Tolerance*

In the discussion of the place of religion in Jewish life, certain basic ideas were set forth. These ideas also have significance, however, in relation to the whole problem of tolerance. We have seen that, according to the conception of religion here developed, there will always be a variety of religions corresponding to the variety of nations. Can this conception of religion help to solve the problem of intolerance? This supplement will attempt to show that not only can this conception of religion help to solve the problem, but that it is only on the basis of this conception of religion that real tolerance can ever be achieved.

Freedom of religion was granted by the modern states, not by the religions in these states. What is the attitude of the various traditional religions in the modern world? Could they consistently accept the principle of religious tolerance? Can one be loyal to one's own religion and still be tolerant of another's? The Catholics still maintain that there is "no salvation outside the Church." How can Catholics therefore say: "My religion is good for me, and yours is good for you"? Indeed, they cannot; they must be intolerant of other religions so long as they believe that Catholicism is of supernatural origin. The same is true of the Protestant sects, which hold to their traditional conception

of the origin of Christianity. When people believe that they have the only Truth, and that that Truth has been revealed to them by God, no other religion can be tolerated by them. It becomes their duty to convert others to this one Truth.

This attitude was shared by all the religions of the western world, in the past, and today it is still shared by the major religious denominations. Even though some Christian thinkers have given up the idea of direct revelation, they still feel that the religion to which they happen to belong is the truest of all religions. They have come to the point where they are willing to admit that other religions have a measure of truth in them; but they will not give up the idea of the superiority of their religion over others. A true understanding of the nature of religion must lead Jews to eliminate from their prayers all statements about their being chosen by God from among all the nations. It is a mistake, however, to assume that only the Jews considered themselves the chosen of God; every religion, which has not adopted the attitude: "my religion is good for me, your religion is good for you," claims that it is divinely revealed, and that its adherents are the chosen people.

So long as that notion persists, there can be no real tolerance. But when it is realized that it is impossible to separate a religion from its civilization, it will be clear that, just as no civilization has the right to destroy another, so no religion has the right to destroy another. And just as civilization can live side by side in peace, so religions must learn to live side by side in peace. On the basis of this conception of tolerance, it is possible to regard other religions as equal to one's own, and yet to be loyal to the ideals and institutions of one's own religion.

## Chapter XXIII

## THE FOLK ASPECT OF JEWISH RELIGION

## I

A RELIGION, AS WE HAVE SEEN, is an integral part of civilization. It is the instrument by means of which the individual in the group is made to realize how important the group is in his life. This has helped to make the individual really human, because whenever he feels like acting in a purely selfish way, he is reminded that his selfishness might interfere with the welfare of the group — and he hesitates. Belonging to the group has helped men to tame themselves and their appetites.

Since the group plays such an important part in the life of the individual, the group uses many occasions for impressing the individual with its own importance. Thus, in all civilizations, there exist initiation rites. These rites call attention to the advantage of being able to share the life of the group, and to the fact that the group is of greater importance than the individual. Through its customs and traditions, religion thus emphasizes the idea that salvation cannot be achieved without the group.

In our day, we find that patriotism is gradually taking the place of the historical religions. The very idea which religion stressed — that salvation cannot be achieved except through the group — has been applied to the state. People feel that salvation is possible only through being identified with the state. Now the civic community satisfies the needs of the individual. But the question might be asked: is not the historical religion also concerned with one's personal attitude toward life? Since patriotism takes no account of the personal and individual reaction to life, how can it take the place of historical religion?

In the past patriotism, which took the form of religion, did deal with personal reactions to life insofar as loyalty to one's group required that each individual subscribe to the doctrines of

the group. But henceforth a new arrangement is necessary to conform with our new notions of personal freedom. There will have to be a sort of division of labor in the spiritual life between the group and the individual. The group will have to provide "group religion," and the individual will have to provide himself with "personal religion."

"Group religion" will consist in crystallizing for the individual those moments and occasions in the life of the group which provide him inspiration and encouragement. "Personal religion" will consist in those ideals and attitudes which the individual might derive from his knowledge of, and contact with, the entire range of human experience throughout the world. It will, therefore, reflect the particular character and background of the individual himself.

When does personal religion begin to operate? When the ideals or standards of the group fail to satisfy certain individuals who feel that the ideals of the group do not always conform to their highest standards of right and wrong. They do one of two things: either they leave the group, and try to work out their own way of life, or they try to influence the group to revise its ideals and standards to measure up to their own. The former happened in the case of the Jewish Christians, who left the body of the Jewish people. The latter happened, for example, in the case of the Prophets and their followers. They could not accept the popular folk standards and ideas. But they did not leave the group; they tried to change it. By preaching and writing, they managed, eventually, to have the group revise its notions; and finally the new ideals and standards *became* the ideals and standards of the group. Those ideals and standards became the folk religion. Thus personal religion helps folk religion to develop and progress.

## II

The relation of folk religion to patriotism is particularly vivid in the case of Christianity. Despite popular notions, Christianity is a folk religion, and not the religion of the individual soul.

In ancient times, the folk was for its members all that they knew of the world. They knew of no other groups; and their gods were for them the only gods that existed. When they became aware that there were other groups and, therefore, other gods, the only way they could prove the supremacy of *their* god was by conquering the other groups and forcing those groups to give up their gods, and to accept the god of the conqueror. Most weak nations, when conquered, immediately adopted the folk religion of the victors. The Jews were the only ones who did not yield to this universal practice.

The Roman Empire modified the practice somewhat. They insisted that the conquered people pay tribute to the Roman gods; but they permitted the various peoples to retain their own folk religions as well. When Rome got so big as to be unwieldy, it was found that the original Roman religion was too weak to act as a bond of unity. Then Rome adopted Christianity, as the one and only legitimate religion of the Roman Empire. All other religions were suppressed; this was done obviously in order to stimulate greater patriotism to Rome. Thus when the doctrine "No salvation outside the Church" was adopted, it meant: Rome is the world; Christianity is the religion of the world; no one seeking salvation can get it outside the Roman Empire.

The Roman church-state was dominant until about the thirteenth century. Then it began to break up. Various nations tried to organize their own states. When, after several centuries, the modern states were organized, the religion of Rome was supplanted in many places by national forms of Christianity. These are the Protestant Churches. What actually happened was that the state took over the functions of the old Roman state-church, and offered salvation to its citizens. But since the tradition of Christianity was so strong, it was impossible to break with it altogether. In reality, the new state left little for the Protestant Churches to do. Indeed, today Protestantism is very hard put to it to discover just what its function is, since patriotism has become the folk religion of modern citizens.

## III

Thus folk religion, in whatever form it appears, is bound to continue. Groups will always have their rituals, festivals, communal gatherings, symbols, and glorification of heroes and martyrs. It is interesting to observe that communism in Russia has become the folk religion of the Russian people. It has its *sancta* — Marx, Lenin, the October Revolution, etc. The individual is expected to surrender his own interests to the interests of the group.

The Jewish civilization, if it is to evoke the best that is in the Jews, must have its folk religion. But in order that the Jewish folk religion succeed in winning the hearts of modern Jews, two things must be done: (1) the rites, symbols and *sancta* of the traditional folk religion must be interpreted in such a way as to be consistent with the highest ideals and aspirations of modern Jews at their best; (2) new forms of folk religion must be developed. These new forms of folk religion will have to depend for their standards and values on the personal religion of the most sensitive souls among the Jews. It is, therefore, necessary for Jews to stimulate an interest in personal religion, so that the finest talent in the group may be encouraged to think, to write and to disseminate the highest possible ethical and religious ideas. When such ideas become the common property of the whole group, they can then be translated into folk religion which everyone may share.

Here it is necessary to point out that, in view of the analysis given, Jews in America, for example, will have to belong to two folk religions. As Americans, their American folk religion will take the form of their patriotic rites, symbols and celebrations; as Jews, their Jewish folk religion will take the form of their Jewish rites, symbols and celebrations. This is a vital point to bear in mind. Previously when people thought that there was one and only one true religion, such an idea was unthinkable. The revolution that must take place in our thinking leads to the conclusion that today an individual belongs to as many religions as the civilizations in which he participates.

Of course, it is only in Israel that the Jews will be able to develop their folk religion to the fullest, for there the Jewish civilization will be primary for Jews, and the most thought and attention will be given to the Jewish civilization. In the diaspora, Jewish folk religion will function just exactly to the same extent that Jewish civilization can be lived. Jewish religion is, so to speak, the index of Jewish life. It is absurd, therefore, to say that Jews should concentrate upon developing an interest in religion, and religion only. Paradoxical as it may sound, the re-birth of the religious life of the Jewish people demands that religion shall cease to be the only thing Jews worry about. When every phase of Jewish life is made to function, Jewish religion is bound to emerge.

## IV

What part will worship play in the folk religion of the future? This question is very important because one of the most outstanding features of present-day Jewish life is the great extent to which Jews have given up the practice of Jewish worship. To many people's minds, worship is a thing of the past. Yet from the point of view of the analysis given here, the only way in which folk religion can function is through public worship. So long as a people will have holidays and festivals to commemorate, events and victories to celebrate, and ideals to assert, the institution of public worship will remain. Though its form may change — and the form of Jewish worship will have to change — it must occupy a place in the folk life.

Ideas about the purpose and method of worship will have to be modified to conform to modern thought. For example, the idea that worship has magical power will have to be given up. People no longer believe that it does any good to take part in worship with the hope of gaining wealth, health, or power, or in the expectation that the worship will be accepted by some Being. Another change, too, must be made in the attitude toward worship; it must no longer be thought that worship must conform to one established form for it to be effective. When people had

the notion that worship was some kind of incantation, they believed that it had to be conducted in the approved manner, or else it would not work. In the future, room must be left for the spontaneous outpouring of the heart, which is possible only when the experienced needs of the worshipers are translated into the language of prayer. To limit worship to stereotyped forms is to prevent it from being the genuine expression of the vital interests of the group. On the other hand, a certain amount of uniformity in worship must be maintained; this gives a sense of unity and a sense of history to all the members of a folk.

One feature of worship which must be retained to make it worship is the practice of addressing God. The question is often asked: how can we use the form of personal address when we do not believe that God has ears to listen to our prayers? It is necessary only to observe how poets use the form of address when they contemplate either natural or spiritual forces. When Byron said, "Yet, Freedom, yet, thy banner, torn but flying, streams like a thunderstorm against the wind," he was aware that "Freedom" was not a personal being. But he never could have felt so strongly about freedom, if it had not meant far more to him than it does to the average person. Freedom was to him so real and powerful an influence, that he was moved to address it in the second person. God, who is the sum of all forces that make for the salvation of man, can be at least as real and potent to the worshiper as freedom seemed to Byron when he invoked it. Therefore, it is only natural to address God in the second person.

Jewish worship, if it is to be truly Jewish, and truly worship, must first of all use the language of the Jewish people, Hebrew. An atmosphere is created by the use of the Hebrew language which no other language can provide. Jewish worship must continue to make use of time-honored symbols which are closely bound up with the Jewish consciousness, such as the *Torah* scroll, the *talit*, the *lulab*, and the *shofar*. Secondly, Jewish worship must be made as esthetic as possible. Both the content and the form of worship must be beautiful. To this end, the talents of the poet, the dramatist, the musician and the artist must be utilized.

Thirdly, Jewish worship must deal with the problems of the present day as well as with the past. Such ideals as justice, peace and freedom should be embodied in liturgy that expresses the highest needs of the modern Jew.

Perhaps if Jews realized the importance of group worship, and the modifications in form and content to which it might be subjected, they would regain the art of worship.

#### Chapter XXIV

### THE PAST STAGES OF THE JEWISH RELIGION

BEFORE OUR TIME, Jews believed that the Jewish religion was revealed to the Israelites in the wilderness of Sinai, complete in all its details. That the Jewish religion underwent a development was not known until recently. Only the patient and painstaking research of Biblical scholars and archeologists succeeded in giving the world a picture of how the Jewish religion really grew. In all that has gone before in this book, the development of the Jewish religion has been implied. It has been assumed that the Jewish conception of God, of Torah, the laws by which Jews lived, changed from age to age. It is upon this assumption that the suggested version of Judaism presented here is based.

It is necessary at this point to be more explicit about the development of the Jewish religion, and to describe exactly how it evolved from earliest times. This is necessary, firstly, because a knowledge of the past is indispensable for any adjustment in the future. "We shall never get the future straight until we disentangle the past." Secondly, a conception of history must constitute part of folk religion. If folk religion is based upon the life of the folk, the past of that folk forms a necessary part of that religion. Jewish religion in the past was always bound up with a conception of Jewish history. The Jewish religion of the future must, likewise, be bound up with a clear conception of the Jewish past. The account of the past stages of the Jewish religion given below is not intended to present the one and only possible account of the development of the Jewish religion; it seems to the author the most acceptable one. The important thing is that some *such* version of the development of Jewish religion must be held by Jews if they are to adjust their religion to the needs of our time.

## I. THE FIRST STAGE

When the Israelites entered Canaan, they brought with them certain unique religious ideas, together with other ideas which they shared in common with other ancient peoples. The unique elements consisted of the following: they believed that their God was Yahweh; that He dwelled in the wilderness of Sinai; that He made a covenant with them which provided that they would recognize Him as their God and obey His laws, and that He would always protect them. Finally, they believed that they possessed an Ark which symbolized that covenant, and which functioned as a constant reminder of the covenant.

With other ancient peoples, the Israelites shared the worship of sacred trees, waters, stones and mountains; they accepted certain myths as true; they practiced magic; and they observed certain taboos. The native Canaanites also practiced these religious rites and shared these beliefs, but they associated them with their own Canaanite gods. At once, a double process began: on the one hand the Israelites came under the influence of the Canaanites, and on the other hand, certain groups among the Israelites tried to keep the latter from this influence. These groups may be named "separatists." The final outcome was that the separatists prevailed. Thus the Jews came to think of themselves as a separate people, under the guidance of Yahweh.

Yahweh was originally conceived in quite primitive terms. When, in addition, the Canaanite influence made itself felt, images were made of Him for worship, and some Israelites even believed that Yahweh desired the sacrifice of human beings.

Despite the attempt to keep the worship of Yahweh separate from the worship of the Canaanite *baalim*, some of the characteristics of the *baalim* were ascribed to Yahweh. The most important of these was the power to give rain. As a desert people, the Israelites had believed that their God was a war-god; now as an agricultural people, they depended on rain for their crops, and they thus came to believe that Yahweh could also bring rain. If they had not done this, Yahweh would not for long have kept the loyalty of the Israelites.

The ark of the covenant, however, helped to keep Yahweh apart from the *baalim*, in the minds of the Israelites. This was a concrete proof for them that their God, who had brought them out of Egypt, was still with them. In addition, the Israelites believed that Yahweh was, by nature, just and merciful. When they looked back on their life in the wilderness, they remembered the spirit of justice and equality which had then prevailed. They believed that Yahweh was responsible for that spirit, and they therefore ascribed those qualities to Him. The fact that they ascribed those traits to Yahweh helped to keep Yahweh distinct from the *baalim*, in the minds of the Israelites.

When King David (c. 1000 B.C.E.) won many victories and gave the Israelites much prestige, they began to entertain the hope that some day Yahweh would extend His rule to include all the nations. The hope that the Israelites had, that Yahweh would one day rule all the nations, was no doubt a reflection of the hope that the Israelites would one day be acknowledged by the other nations as supreme. That day was known as the "Day of Yahweh," which, in many translations of the Bible, is rendered "the Day of the Lord."

But after two or three centuries, when the life of Israel was threatened and the Israelites became over-optimistic because of their reliance on this "Day of the Lord," the Prophets — Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah — gave a different interpretation to the idea of the "Day of the Lord." They said that this Day would not be a day of victory for Israel; that it would be a Day when Yahweh would punish all His enemies — and the ones to suffer the worst punishment would be the sinners in Israel, because they were disloyal, unjust, cruel and impure. Just *because* Yahweh was the God of Israel, Yahweh expected Israel to be an example to the other nations. Thus instead of being a day of triumph, it would be a day of doom — for all who disobeyed Yahweh.

The Prophets made a further contribution. They declared that Yahweh was the only God worthy of the name. Lacking the power, the holiness and the love of justice that Yahweh had, the other gods could not be considered as being gods at all. But if Yahweh was the only real God, how was it that He put up

with this little rebellious people, and called them His own? This was a difficult problem which the Prophets finally solved — as will be described later.

In the meantime (from about 750 to 650 B.C.E.) catastrophe threatened. Assyria, the powerful nation to the north, was defeating all her enemies, and was heading toward Palestine. If Yahweh was the God of Israel, could the doom which seemed inevitable be due to Yahweh's weakness? If so, Yahweh was not the most powerful God; if not, had Yahweh decided to abandon Israel? The Prophets concluded that Yahweh had commanded that these hordes should sweep everything before them, including Israel. The greater part of Israel was really to be destroyed, and only a small remnant was to survive. Although Israel had at one time enjoyed special care from Yahweh, their sins had proved too much. The false prophets, the prophets of optimism, denied these predictions; but the Prophets insisted that Yahweh would protect only those who were just and righteous.

The ruling class was disturbed by the pessimistic utterances of the Prophets, and persecuted them; but they continued their work. Their followers retrieved some of the laws of equality and justice which their ancestors had brought from the wilderness, and reworked them in the spirit of the Prophetic teachings. In the year 621 B.C.E., the opportunity presented itself under the reign of the King Josiah, who was loyal to Yahweh; and they managed to have this code adopted as the law of the land. This was the first time that Israel had a definite code by which it might live in accordance with the will of Yahweh. This became the basis of the Torah. But it took the destruction of the Temple and the Babylonian exile (586 B.C.E.) to put an end to idol worship, to make Jews unswervingly loyal to Yahweh, and to express that loyalty through obedience to His Torah.

## 2. THE SECOND STAGE

The second stage of the Jewish religion covers, on the whole, the period of the second commonwealth (537 B.C.E. to the beginning of the Common Era). The Prophetic teachings had be-

gun to take effect. Yahweh was regarded as the one and only God of the world; Israel, despite its rebelliousness, was still regarded as God's chosen people. The Prophets had resolved this seeming contradiction by assigning to Israel a special role. Although they had sinned, God still loved them, because He felt that, through them, He could make the nations of the world recognize His sovereignty. Israel was to act as the "servant of God"; this was to be their mission in the world: so to live as to bring the nations of the world to the realization that the God of Israel was the one and only God.

What kind of life did this involve? This question gave rise to a whole new set of ideas about the relation between God and man. The new way of life demanded the worship of God; how was God to be worshiped? Before the acceptance of the Torah in the days of King Josiah, when the Israelites thought of Yahweh more as a kind of super-man, it was possible for them to believe that one could come into contact with Him merely by exercising the proper kind of magic, or by pronouncing the proper formula. Since then, the God of Israel came to be regarded as the One God and Creator of the world; communion with Him, therefore, had to be in accord with the new dignity and prestige of His station. Accordingly, it was believed that the God of Israel could be approached only in *one* place which He had chosen; that place was the Temple in Jerusalem. Only members of the authorized priesthood were permitted to perform the ritual in that Temple.

Besides worship, the new Jewish life was to be based upon God's laws. In order to obey the will of God, one had to know what it was. Previously the will of Yahweh was learned through oracles, which were given by the priests to those who came to them to consult Yahweh about some course of action. The prestige of the God of Israel now, however, made such a procedure seem beneath the dignity of the One God. It was believed, therefore, that God had made known His will, once and for all time, through the Torah, the collection of laws contained in the Pentateuch, together with the oral teachings which were regarded as having accompanied the Torah. It was thus possible to know what God would have man do.

Now that it was believed that God would never again make known His will, the people were all the more eager to study the Torah. Since it contained all wisdom and knowledge, and was an inexhaustible source of truth, the study of Torah became the chief spiritual occupation of the Jew. Scribes and teachers arose who taught the Torah, and it was read regularly in the synagogues.

But even during the period of the second commonwealth, the Jews, despite their having the Torah and the Temple, suffered greatly at the hands of foreign powers. This resulted in keeping alive the idea of the Day of the Lord. This idea was still necessary in order to reassure the Jews that they were suffering for some purpose, that some divine plan was being worked out, which involved them in suffering but which, nevertheless, made that suffering worthwhile. But in the meantime (fifth and fourth centuries B.C.E.) a new idea came into Judaism: the idea of resurrection. Imported from alien civilizations, it was utilized to make the individual Jew feel that, even though he had to suffer along with his fellow Jews, some consideration was given to his personal virtue, that the way he conducted his private life counted. The Jew, during this period, therefore, believed that on the Day of the Lord, when God would create a new heaven and a new earth, each individual would be brought to life again and be judged according to his merits. The righteous would be rewarded with a place in the perfect new world; and the wicked would be destroyed forever.

The idea of resurrection grew up when people began to observe that, despite all assertions to the contrary, man did not receive his just deserts in this world. At first, this observation led to sheer skepticism; writers, like the author of Kohelet and Job, challenged the commonly accepted ideas of reward and punishment. But skepticism did not answer the burning question which people asked: "Why do the righteous suffer, and why do the wicked prosper?" Finally, the idea of resurrection developed. With this idea, it was possible to continue believing that there was justice in the world, and, at the same time, to understand why that justice was not apparent in human life. People once again believed with all their heart in the power and justice of God.

### 3. THE THIRD STAGE

The third stage of the Jewish religion began approximately at the time the second commonwealth was threatened with destruction (beginning of the Common Era), and persisted until modern times. It differed from the second period in this respect: whereas during the second stage, the Jews concerned themselves primarily with religion, in the third stage, they concerned themselves *exclusively* with religion. Now their national life was not bound up with any political or even cultural problems; the Jews were conscious only of religion. For it was by means of religion alone that they felt it was possible to keep the nation alive.

During this period there was no political authority; hence the only bond of unity that Jews possessed was their common belief in the supernatural origin of their Torah. Jews no longer challenged basic ideas—as Kohelet and Job had done; questioning and doubt were now considered national treason.

Another factor in Jewish survival was the belief that the Jews cherished about themselves. They believed that their function as a national group was to proclaim their God to the Gentile world, and to declare that their God was the only Being who possessed the power, the justice and the mercy to affect the welfare of mankind. God's power was to be demonstrated by the record of His miracles; His justice, by His establishment of the world to come. The doctrine of the world to come was a further development of the idea of the Day of the Lord. According to this doctrine, this world was just a vestibule into the better and more normal world yet to come. The righteous suffered in this world, not out of sheer accident, but by the will of God who permitted them to suffer either as a means of character discipline, or in order that they might ultimately enjoy greater reward. Thus did God show His justice. His mercy was demonstrated by His willingness to forgive the sins of those who sincerely repented.

The most significant characteristic, however, of the third stage was the attitude which the Jews adopted toward their Torah. For them Torah became an all-absorbing matter: its study, its interpretation, its observance. For to these Jews, to know spe-

cifically what was the will of God was considered infinitely more important than any philosophic notions one might have about the nature of God. The importance of the Torah, however, is best illustrated by the fact that Jews did not establish a sort of church, in which certain chosen priests were selected to study the Torah. This Torah, which contained the will of God, was too vital to be confined to any one group; every Jew had to know it and live by it. Every act of social behavior, every form of conduct had to be carried out in accordance with the divine command. The Torah was the means by which every phase of the national life was governed.

It is true that some knew the Torah better than others. Those who were expert in it were the rabbis, to whom the Jews came for guidance and instruction. The rabbis were the authoritative interpreters. But the rabbis were not in any sense considered, like the priests of the church, as standing between God and the people. The rabbis were merely those who devoted themselves more diligently to the understanding of the divine Law. As such, of course, they were honored in the community and enjoyed special prestige.

The general spirit of the Middle Ages was such as to discourage among Jews the study of science or philosophy in the spirit of free investigation. They assumed that man could never learn the truth by himself; he had to be told the truth by God. Whatever study of science or philosophy was undertaken was done so on the assumption that such study would merely help one to understand better what the Torah contained.

The study and obedience of the laws of the Torah were, thus, the means by which the Jews expected to gain salvation. And we must remember that salvation for them meant sharing in the world to come. This was the only way to qualify for the world to come. Although the Christians, and later the Mohammedans, declared that salvation in the world to come could be achieved only by means of their respective religions, the Jews continued to believe that only through the study and observance of the Torah could salvation be achieved.

This meant virtually that only the Jews would inhabit the world to come. There were, however, certain exceptions: Gentiles might become Jews by being converted. But, on the whole, the Jews imagined the world to come as being occupied only by members of the Jewish people. Is it a wonder then that they were able to think of themselves as being a very special kind of nation? That is the reason why so much of the Rabbinic literature is devoted to idealized descriptions of the Jewish people, to the most flattering self-portrayals of the Jews. In one of these portrayals, for example, the holy spirit of God, the *shekinah*, is pictured as going into exile in order to accompany the Jews in their wanderings; in another, the world is said to have been created just for the sake of Israel.

Thus when we say that the Jewish religion has survived for the last three thousand years, we should mean, not that the ideas and practices have remained unchanged during all this time, but that the Jewish people has maintained, from the beginning down to our own time, a sense of continuity in its spiritual life. Rites and beliefs have changed; ideals and aspirations have changed; but these changes have been only like those that go on in the human body. The Jewish people has been a constant factor all the way through this long career. Just as a person, at the age of fifteen, with certain immature ideas, and at the same time, certain fine idealisms, grows into manhood, when he has different ideas and different ideals, and is yet the same individual human being; so the Jewish people is the same people as the one that, in its youth, worshiped Yahweh, and which cherished ideals that now no longer seem acceptable. But in all these changes, the Jewish people has been aware that there has been no break in the continuity of its highest strivings.

Now the Jewish people, having outgrown, to a great extent, the ideas and ideals of its previous periods, is about to enter upon a fourth stage of its history. But the transition from the third to the fourth stage must be different from any of the previous

transitions. The difference consists in this: whereas, in the past, the Jewish people moved unconsciously from one stage to another, today that transition must be conscious. Just as the child grows into boyhood and adolescence, without realizing that he has entered a new stage of his development, until he is already there, the Jews were able to pass imperceptibly from one period into another. But the adult uses his intelligence, grapples with problems, and is hence aware of those problems; he studies, he discusses, he probes — until finally he arrives at a decision which marks a definite change in his outlook or his ideals. The Jewish people today has come into maturity, through the fact that Jews have applied themselves to the study of modern philosophy, science, sociology, etc. Jews are no longer able just to grow imperceptibly. They must use their intelligence, their conscious efforts, to reconstruct the Jewish religion which modern thought has done so much to undermine.

The fact that Jews today are aware of the evolution of Jewish religion makes them, so to speak, more sophisticated than their ancestors, who never realized that their religion had developed, but who thought that what they believed had always been believed by Jews at all times, and that what they did had always been done by Jews in all generations. As soon as Jews become conscious of the fact that their past can be divided into distinct stages of development, it is impossible for them to imagine that their own interpretation is the one that was always accepted by the Jews. They must, of necessity, be more conscious of the fact that whatever interpretation they develop is a new one.

But the use of intelligence in the formulation of the Jewish religious ideas of the future must not mean that man's traditional values must be altogether disregarded. The ideals of the past must be so reinterpreted as to be of value to us in the future. This is not an easy task. How shall it be done? The following chapter will give some suggestions as to the method that might be used in order to reinterpret Jewish religion in such a way as to make it once again a vital force in the lives of Jews.

## Chapter XXV

### A SUGGESTED METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

#### I

THE JEWISH RELIGION of the past was unique. In what respect will the Jewish religion in the future be unique? Its uniqueness will not depend upon its claim to be the sole Truth; its uniqueness will depend upon the uniqueness of the Jewish civilization of the future. This does not mean, however, that the past will no longer be of any use. On the contrary, the religion of the future will derive a great deal of its strength from the past, just as Jewish civilization will continue to make use of the *sancta* of the Jewish past.

There are those, of course, who would say: what is the use of retaining any part of the old religion? Why not create an entirely new one? The answer is: there is a momentum, an emotional drive which tradition possesses, and which can be of great value. If the proper method is used, new ideas and ideals gain in power when they emerge out of the ideas and ideals of the past. Jews in former years were real men and women; they experienced very much the same kinds of emotions, conflicts, hopes that Jews do today. There is very much in common, humanly speaking, between any two generations of people. In the experience of many generations, certain general ideas have been evolved which could be of great value to the present. To turn our backs upon the past altogether would be to discard whatever value this vast experience might have. Certainly, some basic truths must have been learned by Jews in the past. If it were possible to get behind the words that they used, the particular language in which they couched these ideas, and the peculiar forms in which they expressed them, we might discover underlying truths that would apply to modern life.

The fundamental urges of human nature have not changed. Men have always been faced with the fact that they live in a

world which seems hostile to them; they have always yearned to find themselves in a friendly universe, a universe friendly to their highest aspirations. Human beings have always yearned for a society in which justice and peace might reign. If we could study the psychology of our ancestors, we would find beneath all their rites and practices and beliefs certain permanent human strivings.

Let us for example study the idea of God as contained in traditional Judaism, and see whether, by applying this psychological method, we cannot extract certain noble and beautiful ideas out of the traditional beliefs and conceptions which surrounded this basic idea of God. In the past, God was called "the creator." From the point of view of the philosophy of the Middle Ages, creator meant: one who can bring something into being from just nothing. Is such creation possible or conceivable? The philosophers spent many generations arguing the point. The suggested method of interpretation, however, would lead us to observe that the statement: "God created the world," was merely the old way of saying: "God is the name we should apply to all those forces in the world which make for creativity." Creativity in human life is evident in the intelligence that discovers new truths, in the courage that shows itself in the spirit of useful adventure, in the discovery and expression of new forms of beauty, and in the wisdom that achieves new ways of social cooperation. All of this we should learn to look upon as the ways in which God shows Himself the creator.

God was called "helper and protector." In our day this means that in the forces of nature which help keep us alive, and in the spirit of cooperation and the skill of invention which help make life livable, we may see evidence of God in the world. We experience the presence of God whenever we observe man conquering disease, crime and poverty.

God was called "redeemer." In our day, whenever we see men seeking freedom and struggling to attain it, we see revealed the divine in men.

God was called "a righteous judge." This means that God is the power that makes for justice in the world.

What is actually behind this method of interpretation? Simply this: we seek to penetrate behind the phrases used by our ancestors, and to observe what it was they were attempting to express, what ideals, what aspirations, what standards they were trying to set up when they spoke in the terms they used. We discover that being human, they were seeking freedom, justice, peace and self-fulfillment or salvation, as people seek them today, and ever will. They saw God at work in the world whenever those ideals or aspirations were furthered. We should do likewise.

The terms or concepts which human beings used to express their ideals and aspirations were always colored by the particular interests which they had to defend, and the knowledge of the world which they happened to possess. That is why they believed, in the past, that God could interfere with the natural course of events for the sake of the welfare of some individual or group which deserved such special protection. In those days, they did not know anything about what we call "natural law," so that when they wanted to say that this individual or that group deserved extraordinary recognition, they expressed the idea in terms of the knowledge of their day. The fact that we today no longer believe in miracles has nothing to do with the main idea behind the belief in miracles, namely, that outstanding virtue deserves outstanding recognition, and that those who advance the ideals of mankind deserve special protection and care.

In the same way, people in the past believed that this world, with all its suffering and strife, was bound to give way to a new and better world in the future, that this world was only a vestibule into that next and perfect world. This was the *science* of the past; people believed in the world to come as implicitly as people believe today that the world is round. We reject this idea, and insist that this world, being the only world we know, must be made a better place to live in. Does this mean that we have nothing in common with those people in the past? Hardly so. If we apply the suggested method of interpretation, we find that the really important aspect of that belief in the world to come corresponds to deep human strivings which all modern

people feel; and that the picture of the world to come itself is not important. When they spoke of the world to come, they were expressing an inner urge, namely, the urge to look forward to a condition of human existence which would be free from the physical, spiritual and social ills that detract from the worthwhileness of life. They never realized that it was within their power to bring about a change in conditions, and that is why they expressed themselves in those terms. But they were really talking about this world as they would have liked to see it: without slavery and war, without want and suffering, without disease and crime.

## II

It will probably be said that when this interpretation has been applied Jewish religion will be so different that it could not be recognized as being a continuation of the Jewish religion of the past. This criticism should not be regarded as legitimate. Certainly King David would never have recognized the Jewish religion of Maimonides! And very often it happens that when a middle-aged man looks at a picture of himself as a child, he exclaims, "Is that *me*?" The fact is that, as time goes on, the words that people use to express certain ideals and hopes change. But the aspiration toward the good life is common to every civilization worthy of the name, and to every religion which a civilization develops.

Basic changes in religion come about only when basic changes take place in the circumstances and conditions under which people live. These changes in circumstances and conditions lead men to learn new things about the world and themselves. Yet the new things that men have learned affect their aspiration toward the good life only in their ways of expressing it. The striving after truth, peace, justice and righteousness continues under new forms. In our day, Jewish civilization, entering upon its fourth stage, should concern itself again with the effort to foster, knowingly and deliberately, the historical striving of our forebears in the direction of universal truth and social idealism.

This effort will necessarily find expression in ideas and practices that reckon with the new circumstances and conditions.

For the modern man, to be religious must mean to insist that life has meaning, that it is worthwhile. It will mean the opposite of cynicism, which asserts that nothing is worthwhile, that life is, has been and always will be a meaningless chaos, and that there is no point in trying to do anything about it. The real atheist must be recognized as the person who does not think it is worthwhile expending any effort on trying to achieve ideals. The person who believes in God will be the one who believes that the world has direction and purpose, that life is not the victim of blind chance. The non-religious person must be recognized as the one who says, "Nothing matters anyway. Let us eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die." The religious person will not say this. He will find it worthwhile working for ideals even when he knows that they cannot be realized in his own lifetime.

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## PART SIX

### TORAH

Judaism as a Way of Life for the American Jew



TORAH  
JUDAISM AS A WAY OF LIFE FOR THE  
AMERICAN JEW

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*Chapter XXVI*

INTRODUCTORY: TORAH AS A WAY OF LIFE

WHEN JEWS IN THE PAST thought of themselves as the chosen people, they did so not because they thought they were morally or intellectually superior to other peoples. They did so because they believed that their way of life was the only good and true way of life. Jews did not believe that this way of life was their own creation, but rather that God had worked it out for them. They believed that the Torah which contained this way of life had been revealed to their ancestors on Mount Sinai.

Most Jews today have given up this idea about the origin of the Torah. Many of them conclude that the Torah can have no value whatever for them. This is a wrong conclusion. The reconstruction of Jewish life depends, not upon the blind acceptance of the traditional beliefs about the Torah, but upon the interest which Jews develop in the Torah as the record of Israel's attempt to live the good life. Jews must not think that the choice before them is: either to believe in the supernatural origin of the Torah or else have nothing to do with it. There is another alternative, and that is to apply to Torah that psychological method of interpretation which was applied in previous chapters to the ideas of Israel and God.

Let us try to understand what was behind the belief, which our ancestors cherished, that the Torah had been divinely revealed? What were they attempting to express when they praised the Torah as divine and perfect? What did they mean when they said that salvation could come only to those who observed the Torah, and when they echoed the words of the Psalmist who said, "Happy are they that are upright in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord"?

They were expressing the conviction that they were deriving, from the laws and teachings of their people, the guidance which helped them to live the good life, to achieve self-fulfillment. Now, what can we derive for our purpose from that conviction? First, that when they used the word Torah they meant to convey exactly what we mean to convey by the term "civilization." Torah for them was a way of life; if, therefore, we wish to reinterpret that idea for our day we must conclude that, if Judaism is to function in our lives, it must do so by means of laws and teachings which provide us with a way of life. Jewish life must include law, folkways, customs, ethics, etc. In other words, Judaism must again cover the whole range of human life.

The second inference we should make by means of this method of interpretation is that the function of a civilization should be to guide its people to live the *good* life, to achieve salvation. The Torah should be for us a symbol of the idea that a civilization, to be worthy of the name, must provide for its members what the Torah provided for the Jews in the past. This is the criterion by which to judge a civilization, whether it be the Jewish civilization or any other: if it helps to give its members the life abundant, if its laws, customs, institutions, etc., make for men's free development and growth, it is worthy to be called a civilization; if not, it is a barbarism.

Thus in seeking to foster the Jewish civilization in the spirit of Torah, we are actually continuing, in our day, the two-fold yearning expressed in the traditional Torah: (1) the yearning to receive from one's people the guidance necessary for living; (2) the yearning to make certain that that guidance makes for living the good life, for salvation or self-fulfillment.

But many changes must be made in the manner of Jewish living. Conditions require these changes. Instead, however, of discarding Jewish practices, we should modify them, reinterpret them, add to them. Similar changes will have to be made in the type of ethics which Jewish life should advance, and the kind of educational program which Jews should advocate. What is involved in such reconstruction for Jewish life in America will be indicated in the chapters that follow.

## Chapter XXVII

### THE FAMILY AND THE SYNAGOGUE IN JEWISH LIFE

#### A. THE JEWISH FAMILY

IF JEWISH LIFE is to survive outside Israel it must have an environment in which it can flourish. There must be certain places where the atmosphere is congenial. The most important place where such an atmosphere can be created is the Jewish home. It is in the home that the child gets his first and most lasting impressions. If the home can be so established as to give the child a love for Jewish life, a great deal can be accomplished to make that child always happy that he is a Jew.

As a civilization, Judaism requires a social unit; the individual by himself cannot be Jewish in a satisfying way. The simplest social unit is that of father, mother and child. If that simple unit finds a way of making Jewish life beautiful and interesting, it will not be so difficult to organize the larger units, of community and nation. The first requirement which the family unit must meet is: the father and mother must both be Jewish. If Jews continue to intermarry with Gentiles at the rate at which they are now doing it, the future of Jewish life is threatened.

It is not enough, however, merely to say that Jews should oppose intermarriage. Intermarriage is on the increase, and Jews must reckon with that fact. Instead of using up energy decrying the situation, we should concentrate upon making Jewish life so important and meaningful in the lives of Jews that, when an intermarriage does take place, the Jewish member of the couple will insist that the home be Jewish, and that the children be brought up as Jews.

The Jew of today must learn to look to the tradition and the life of his people for inspiration to live the good life. As far as

family life is concerned, the Jew has much in his tradition which should inspire him to a pure and wholesome life. Sexual purity has always been one of the outstanding ideals in Judaism. The ideal of chastity has been preached since the days of the Prophets; but it is interesting to note that, whereas Christianity interpreted chastity in terms of celibacy, Judaism interpreted chastity as essential to a loyal and faithful family life.

The family of today faces a serious crisis; statistics indicate how many couples do not live their lives through together. Divorces are numerous. If Jewish life is going to depend so much upon the family for survival, Jews must undertake to strengthen the institution of the family altogether. They must emphasize, especially, one important fact about the family: and that is, that the family is a *social* institution, and that the tendency to think of the family as a private matter is a dangerous one.

How shall Jews be impressed with the thought that marriage is the concern of the whole community? First, every Jewish marriage should be performed by a representative of the Jewish community; second, every Jewish marriage should be registered in the communal records; third, by engaging upon sex-education and marriage education. The state apparently is satisfied to leave these matters to the various religious and historic groups. Let the Jews take advantage of the opportunity to conduct classes and clinics in the problems of marriage. Never before was such a program necessary. But now that family life is in such danger of breaking up, and since Jews have always held up family purity and loyalty as a high virtue, it is both necessary and proper that the Jewish community help young men and women face their futures as husbands, wives, fathers and mothers.

Despite all efforts, however, a certain number of divorces will undoubtedly occur. The only authoritative law, by which Jews can guide their lives, makes no provision for conditions which obtain today. It dealt only with situations in which Jews did not resort to Gentile courts. Nowadays, Jews as citizens, must submit in divorce procedure to the law of the land. As a result, situations arise when men and women divorced in ac-

cordance with civil law, often discover that it is impossible for them to procure a Jewish divorce. For such a situation, there is no provision in Jewish law. Consequently, a former husband will often extort money from a former wife who wishes to remarry, and who depends upon him for the Jewish bill of divorce. There are other instances in which the Jewish law, dealing with marital relations, coming as it does from an environment radically different from ours, places hindrances in the way of legitimate adjustments. In these instances, too, the failure to bring Jewish law up to date is likely to destroy all respect for Jewish law as a whole.

Reformers have "solved" the problem of Jewish divorce by simply giving up all claim to authority in these matters. They have definitely abrogated Jewish law. By doing so, they have destroyed the possibility of establishing any kind of Jewish community life. As soon as the life of the family, marriage and divorce are taken out of the Jewish jurisdiction, Jewish life can hope to exercise no influence over Jewish family life. It is even a mockery for a rabbi to perform a Jewish marriage, if he does not represent the community but himself, or at the best only a local synagogue group. His performance of the marriage becomes then a mere formality, which is not binding at all.

The Conservatives have tried another method, that of modifying the divorce law within the existing body of traditional law. They have tried so to interpret the ancient law as to make it apply to new conditions. For example, in the case of the *agunah*, the Rabbinical Assembly of America has attempted to bring the law into conformity with modern times. The *agunah* is a woman whose husband has disappeared, and who has no proof that he has died. According to Jewish law, she may not remarry, and there is nothing anybody can do for her. She is not a widow, nor a divorcee; she is regarded as a married woman, even though her husband has not been seen or heard from for many years. It is highly questionable whether the ancient law can actually be interpreted in such a way as to help the *agunah*. It is doubtful, indeed, whether within the framework of traditional law any vital changes can be made.

The Neo-Orthodox, for example, have opposed the *agunah* proposal strenuously. This is in accord with their general attitude. They maintain that Jewish law cannot and should not be changed in accordance with conditions; conditions rather must be made to fit Jewish law.

The only hope of a satisfactory solution to the question of how to make Jewish law function again in Jewish life — especially with regard to the family and the status of woman — is to regard Judaism as a civilization. This means that Judaism must find expression in law, but not necessarily in traditional laws. If Jewish women really desired to help keep Jewish law alive, and at the same time to gain for themselves a decent status in the Jewish community, they would start a movement to win religious and civic equality. Under traditional law, Jewish women are not even permitted to testify as witnesses. They cannot institute divorce proceedings. They cannot qualify as members of a *minyan*, the minimum number necessary in order to carry on a public religious service. Every modern civilization is gradually granting the woman complete equality with the man. Before long, her equality will be complete in most countries of the world. This should be a challenge to Jewish women.

It is also a challenge to all Jews who desire to see Jewish life adjusted to modern times. No intelligent Jewish woman, or Jewish man, can have much respect for Jewish law, or the authority of those who interpret Jewish law, when it is known that practically all the ancient restrictions on women are still maintained. If Judaism is to influence the home and the family, Jewish law must be changed. But, in the last analysis, the problem of Jewish law in relation to the Jewish woman is the problem of the women themselves. They must demand the equality to which they are entitled.

Other civilizations have conceded the right of women to be treated on an equal footing with men. That right does not imply that women should be expected to perform the same tasks as men, but that in all matters of law, education and religion they should be treated as full-fledged persons. There is no reason why the Jewish civilization should persist in treating them in this day and age as though they were minors, half-wits or slaves.

## B. THE SYNAGOGUE

The family, important as it is, cannot function alone. The family itself must have a congenial atmosphere in which it can flourish as a Jewish family. That atmosphere should be provided by the synagogue. At present, the synagogue is not organized as it should be. Congregations organize synagogues, and these synagogues are, so to speak, the private clubs to which the members of the congregations go to worship.

The synagogue must become a community affair, in which every Jew feels that he has a place. Synagogues should be conducted by the entire community. They should be, in addition, not only places of worship but of cultural, social and recreational activities.

This reconstruction of the synagogue is necessary because vital changes have taken place in the environment in which the Jew finds himself. The new environment is not conducive to those social and cultural activities which formerly gave content and meaning to Jewish life. In the past, Jews lived in ghettos. In the ghettos, despite their handicaps, they enjoyed a great deal of fellowship, the warmth of friendships and the stimulation of a common life with other Jews. Today, the ghetto cannot and should not be restored. But the community-center-synagogue can provide a good deal of that friendliness and common life which Jews used to get from the ghetto life. Therefore, the purpose of the synagogue should be not only to provide facilities for worship, but to create the kind of environment which is conducive to Jewish group life.

Efforts have been made to improve the service. Music, decorum and English sermons have been introduced to make the service more esthetic. But despite all efforts to attract people to services, they have not responded. Why? Because a fundamental error has been made. Public worship never was the sole or even the principal activity of the synagogue. Study, fellowship and philanthropy were emphasized to no less an extent than worship. Ever since Reform has changed the synagogue into a Temple, Jews have been given the impression that the main

object for which Jews should get together is for worship. Indeed, public worship should be one of the functions of the synagogue, but by no means the only one, nor even the principal one.

The synagogue should become a Jewish neighborhood center, in which many activities take place. Jews have many things in common, besides their interest to worship together. Literature, music and the theatre interest them, and they find them worthwhile ways of spending their leisure time. They gain real spiritual benefit from such activities, and it is a mistake to imagine that Jews can develop a spiritual attitude only from worship; they can be influenced spiritually no less effectively by hearing fine music, or reading good books, or watching a moving play. While such activities have general spiritual value, to exercise an influence on Jewish life they should be conducted within a Jewish environment and should be selected as far as possible with the purpose of intensifying Jewish life. If the synagogue would expand its activities to include a school for children, recreational facilities, adult study and art groups, communal activities, religious services and festival pageants and plays, and social activities, every Jew, no matter what his interests are, would want to identify himself with the synagogue.

If a community center is located in a neighborhood where various types of religious service are demanded, several different services should be held. It is probable, however, that, after a while, the American Jew will develop a type of service which will satisfy all elements. It is already evident that the differences that separate one type of Jew from another are breaking down.

If the neighborhood center succeeds in supplying for the Jew in the diaspora the kind of environment or atmosphere in which Jewish living is encouraged and in which it can flourish, it will become an important factor in the reconstruction of Jewish life.

### Chapter XXVIII

## JEWISH FOLKWAYS

IN JEWISH TRADITION all observances, laws and ethical principles were known as *mitsvot* (divine commandments). A *mitsvah* (singular of *mitsvot*) might deal with man's relation to man, or "with man's relation to God." Those dealing with man's relation to man might be listed under the class of morals, or civil law; the rest might be called ritual. According to traditional Judaism, *mitsvot* of whatever class were equally important and binding, because it was believed that they were all commanded by God. In modern times, a distinction has been made between these two classes of *mitsvot*. Those dealing with ritual have been called "ceremonies." The idea behind this new name is to make people feel that they ought to observe the ritual, not in the spirit of obeying a law, but in the spirit of joy and willingness.

But the word "ceremonies" does not lend sufficient importance to these acts. It implies that they are formalities which may or may not be observed; that they are just decorative, and not really important. The word "*folkways*" is a much better term, and will be used in this discussion, because "*folkways*" really conveys the proper idea of what the function of these acts should be. First, the word conveys the thought that these acts are the very stuff of Jewish life, that they are ways through which Jews express their Jewishness. A Jewish folkway is an act which distinguishes a Jew. Secondly, it implies that these acts may be changed as conditions require.

Of course, not all folkways are of equal importance. Two classes of folkways should therefore be borne in mind: (1) religious folkways, and (2) cultural folkways. Religious folkways have as their main purpose to emphasize certain spiritual or

moral values; cultural folkways should emphasize the common life which Jews live, and the particular interests which they cherish. Examples of the first: the Sabbath, festivals, holidays, worship. Examples of the second: the Hebrew language, the Jewish calendar, the wearing of the *talit* in worship, etc. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between the two classes; what makes one religious and another cultural is often a question of emphasis.

#### A. RELIGIOUS FOLKWAYS

When Jews accepted the traditional beliefs about the origin of the Torah, they had no difficulty in observing religious folkways without questioning. The philosophers tried to show that many of the rituals could be explained on the ground of their ethical or spiritual significance, and in some cases also their hygienic value. Today, however, the interpretations of the philosophers do not seem to be sufficiently convincing to make Jews feel that they ought to continue the ritual practices. Reform has actually dropped many ritual practices from its program. Neo-Orthodoxy has tried to keep all of them. Despite their efforts, most Jews today are still very much in the dark as to which ritual practices they should observe and which they might discard; and, with regard to those that they still observe, Jews are perplexed as to how to observe them.

A clear understanding of the purpose of religious folkways will help to establish certain standards of observance. Before our time, there were only two attitudes that one might take toward religious folkways: either they were divinely commanded and therefore they should be obeyed to the letter; or they were not, and therefore they might be discarded. But if it is understood that religious folkways are the *poetic symbols of moral and spiritual values*, altogether different conclusions are arrived at. Religious folkways should be observed in the spirit of joy, not in the spirit of mere conformity. They should broaden our sympathies, direct our attention to larger and nobler ideals, and put us in tune with spiritual values.

An illustration will help here. Let us examine the marriage rite: what should be the purpose of such a rite? Evidently, at the time of marriage the bride and groom are likely to think only of themselves and of each other, to look forward only to their personal happiness, and are in danger of ignoring the rest of the world. A marriage rite, as a religious folkway, should emphasize to them that marriage is more than a matter between two people, that the whole community is involved in the founding of a home. Even for themselves, the rite should point out, marriage is an opportunity to develop their personalities, to broaden their interests and their sympathies. They should be made to realize that, through these means, marriage can bring about in their lives the experience of the divine in human life.

A similar religious folkway is observed when the young boy enters adolescence. Jews observe the *bar mitsvah* rite. What should be the purpose of this rite? It should emphasize the fact that, with added years, the boy should add to his stature, spiritually. He should become aware of new responsibilities, new interests.

Similarly with every turning point in the life of the individual, or with every important occasion, significance can be added by rites. Now, whenever a rite makes us more sensitive, more aware of moral values, it becomes a means of making us aware of the spiritual aspect of life; in terms of religion, it makes us aware of God.

Rites give distinctiveness to a civilization. The unique emotional experience and the particular manner of life are what make Jews Jews, and Englishmen Englishmen. As soon as a people loses its distinctive customs and folkways, its civilization begins to disintegrate. The Jews today find themselves in that danger. Jewish folkways are not being observed, and Jewish civilization is, therefore, in danger of disintegrating. This is not entirely due to the Jews; it is due mainly to the fact that many of the religious folkways have outlived their usefulness. It will therefore be necessary to revise the entire system of Jewish folkways.

But if that revision is to take place, Jews must regard Judaism as a civilization, for it is only from that viewpoint that folkways

have any place in Jewish life, or that Jews have the right to modify them. In Judaism viewed as a civilization, Jews have the right to demand that their folkways be meaningful and esthetic, and that they really express the highest ideals of the people. Some people will always be afraid that as soon as changes are made there will be anarchy in Jewish life. No greater anarchy could exist than that which now prevails, and that is because Jews are confused about the whole question. As soon as they realize what the function of folkways is, and how they should be approached, we shall have not anarchy, but a wholesome variety of folkways and observances.

What attitude should Jews take toward the dietary laws? These can no longer be regarded as divine commands; nor will it help much to try to show that *kosher* food is more sanitary than *trefa*. The dietary laws should be observed with the purpose in mind of adding a specifically Jewish atmosphere to the home. Ultimately *kashrut* might serve as a source of support of community organization. If the community would take over the supervision of *kashrut*, it could tax the sale of *kosher* products and utilize the income to maintain its various institutions. Since communal organization is so vital to Jewish life, *kashrut* could take on a significant character as a vital force for Jewish survival.

In addition to *kashrut*, other religious folkways should contribute to making the Jewish home Jewish. The benediction before the meal, and the grace after the meal, give those at the table a sense of gratitude for the food they are eating, the realization that there are thousands of men and women who have no food, and hence a greater sensitiveness to the needs of others. Eating can be a matter of sheer consuming of food; by means of religious folkways, it can become an opportunity for broadening the mind and refining the spirit.

How shall the Sabbath be observed? Certainly the modern Jew is not prepared to accept the Talmudic definition of what is work. But whenever possible the work which is done all week for a living should not be done on the Sabbath. Marketing, housecleaning, cooking are also inappropriate on the Sabbath.

In general, any kind of activity which creates the atmosphere of the work-a-day world is out of spirit with the peace and quiet of a rest day. But the important problem is not really: what should be forbidden? The main problem is: what activities should be conducted on the Sabbath which can express the real spirit of the day?

At home, on Friday evening, families should get together. Even when late services are held in the synagogue the family should make every effort to spend their dinner time together and to make the home a happy and wholesome place of reunion. It is then that parents can really come to know their children, and the children their parents. On Sabbath morning the service should be the most important activity. Even those men who are compelled to go to their businesses then should try to break away, if it be even for an hour, to attend the service. A special afternoon service might be arranged for those who simply find it impossible to come in the morning.

On Sabbath afternoons recreational or educational functions should be held. Lectures, round-table discussions, study circles, literary circles, are well attended at that time. From Eretz Yisrael the idea of the *oneg shabbat* has been imported. At the *oneg shabbat*, the men and women sit around, partake of refreshments, sing songs, listen to a lecture, or participate in a discussion, and close with the rites attending the end of the Sabbath (*habdalah*).

Jews must reckon with the problem of riding on the Sabbath. They might just as well realize that in many cities the synagogue is far from the home. It is better that they ride to the synagogue than that they refrain from riding and spend their time at something less worthwhile. Of course, if Jews will take the matter seriously they will try to refrain from riding unless they do so for some Jewish purpose, or for some purpose which is in the spirit of the Sabbath.

The fear has often been expressed that as soon as Jews are permitted to do things on the Sabbath which were previously forbidden, they will recognize no limit and will eventually do

away with the Sabbath altogether. This represents a peculiar attitude: if Jews are so eager to do away with the Sabbath, no amount of legislation will affect them. If they are eager to live fine Jewish lives, they seek guidance; they do not want to be told all over again the list of "don'ts." Therefore the few suggestions made here are made to indicate the direction in which Sabbath observance will have to go, and the kind of attitude Jews will have to take toward it, if Jewish life is once again to be a source of beauty and interest to them.

How should the festivals and holidays be understood in order that they may contribute to the spiritual development of Jews? The significance of these occasions can best be brought out by relating them to current needs and ideals. This requires the type of interpretation which was suggested in a previous chapter ("Suggested Method of Interpretation"). By means of this method, the basic idea behind the traditional observance of a festival should be brought to the surface and emphasized, applying that idea to modern problems.

*Pesah* should direct our attention to freedom. Those energies in man and in society that make for freedom, and the proper use of freedom, make us aware of God in the world. The traditional idea of God as "redeemer" can thus be brought home.

*Shabuot* should direct our attention to the idea of ethical peoplehood. It was on that occasion that the Israelites were given the Torah, according to tradition. Since it was the Torah that made the Israelites into a people, *Shabuot* should be dedicated to the proper understanding of the nature of peoplehood.

*Sukkot* should emphasize the doctrine of equality. The *sukkah* in ancient times became the symbol, for Israel's Prophets, of the simple life of the desert. This life they idealized, because in it there were no distinctions between rich and poor, strong and weak; all were on an equal plane. On *Sukkot*, therefore, all the various phases of the problem of equality should be emphasized.

*Sukkot* in ancient Israel was also the festival of thanksgiving. When the crops were brought in, the Israelites offered sacrifices of gratitude at the Temple. This festival today therefore should

emphasize the sentiment of gratitude, which is, in reality, a reflection of the sense of the worthwhileness of life.

*Rosh Ha-Shanah* should emphasize the rebirth of social ethics. In traditional Judaism, this holy day was used to emphasize the sovereignty of God. In our day, the sovereignty of God should mean the belief that peace, justice, and righteousness will ultimately reign in the world.

*Yom Kippur* should emphasize the rebirth of individual ethics. On *Yom Kippur*, traditionally, it was believed that God listened to the prayers of the repentant sinners, and forgave those who were sincere in their repentance. In our day, the holiday should interpret God's forgiveness as the symbol of man's ability to change himself.

In the celebration of each of these occasions, certain symbols are used: on *Pesah*, the *matsot*; on *Sukkot*, the *sukkah*, the *etrog* and the *lulav*; on *Rosh Ha-Hashanah*, the *shofar*; on *Yom Kippur*, the fasting. These symbols should appeal to the heart of the Jew; and their full meaning can be brought out by means of appropriate religious and esthetic expression.

What has been said about the celebration of the Sabbath applies also to the celebration of these festivals and holidays. In addition, however, each of them has its own unique significance which gives imaginative and creative people an opportunity for self-expression.

*Hanukkah* and *Purim* should be celebrated with great enjoyment and enthusiasm. The lighting of the candles, the giving of gifts, the arrangement of parties on *Hanukkah* should all furnish a source of happy fellowship and joyful celebration.

These are some of the religious folkways which, if approached in the proper spirit, and observed with a sense of what is appropriate, should give to the modern Jew many occasions for rejoicing, for serious thinking, for exalting of the spirit. Each of them, understood properly, symbolizes some vital moral and religious theme. It is a rich life, indeed, which includes in its calendar the observance of all of them.

## B. CULTURAL FOLKWAYS

Cultural folkways have as their purpose the creation of Jewish consciousness, and the development of a sense of unity among Jews. The outstanding among these cultural folkways will be discussed here.

1. *The Hebrew Language*: Anyone who wants to feel a sense of intimacy with Jewish life must know at least some Hebrew. Once a Jew comes to look upon Hebrew as a foreign language, he begins to question whether or not it is worthwhile being a Jew. To live Judaism as a civilization, it is necessary, first of all to study Hebrew. The language should be taught in the public high schools; and as a matter of fact it has been introduced into quite a number of them in some of the larger cities of the United States.

It is not likely that most Jews will learn enough Hebrew to be able to make it a language for everyday use. But sufficient knowledge of the language should be acquired in order to understand easy portions of the Bible, the contents of the prayer book, references made to institutions, movements and events in Israel, and similar matters that come into the lives of Jews who are concerned with Jewish life.

2. *Jewish Names*. Almost the first thing a Jew does when he tries to escape being Jewish is to change his name, and to make it sound goyish. Jews will have regained a vast amount of their self-respect when they no longer call their children by fancy non-Jewish names. In Israel, many Jews have already Hebraized their names. In America it would be a fine symbol of the conception of ethical peoplehood if Jews decided to show by their Hebrew first names that they live in two civilizations.

3. *The Jewish Calendar*: Since so many Jewish folkways are observed according to the dates of the historic calendar, the retention of the calendar itself has great value in keeping Jewish consciousness alive.

4. *Jewish Arts*: The great fascination which most modern civilizations seem to exert over people lies in their art creations. Judaism as a civilization must encourage its artists to express

their ideals and ideas in and through Jewish life. The value of Jewish art has already become apparent from what Israel has thus far inspired. The works of Jewish artists have given Jews, otherwise indifferent, a sense of the beauty and meaning that underlie the renaissance of Jewish life.

The theatre is another medium through which Jewish life can be made vivid and impressive. There are endless possibilities for the talents of the dramatist to be expressed. *Zweig's Jeremiah* is just one example of the dramatic power and beauty that lie in the material that Jewish history has to offer.

Jewish public buildings should have Jewish character. In architecture, the artist has an uncharted field for self-expression. There is as yet no real Jewish architecture. With the renaissance of Jewish life, architecture will have to play a part.

In the home, beautiful objects of Jewish character can make the Jewish atmosphere a lovely one. Arts and crafts clubs, for example, should be organized wherever Jewish educational work is done, for the purpose of making fine things for the Jewish home.

Jewish worship itself can be beautified, and should be, by the creation of Jewish liturgical music and by the composition of new, fervent poetry. Instead of constantly repeating the same ritual, Jews with talent ought to express their prayerful thoughts in poetic form, and make it possible for those who attend the synagogue to hear, not only the religious poetry of ages gone by, but the religious poetry of our own potential psalmists. Even drama, the dance and music should be utilized to make Jewish worship a really moving and compelling experience. What a marvelous change would come over the attitudes of many Jews if they knew that, when they came to the synagogue, they would see and hear a service which would excite, exalt and thrill them! The possibilities are vast if only Jews took the proper approach to Jewish worship.

Chapter XXIX

JEWISH ETHICS

A. MAKING MEN ETHICAL

THE VALUE OF A CIVILIZATION depends on how strong its influence is in making its members ethical. In ancient times, when people felt that the morals by which they were living were no longer the right ones, and when they looked for new moral standards, they despaired because they lost confidence in themselves. Finding that their moral standards led to war and strife, they decided that they were incapable altogether of directing their own lives; that if they were ever to live the good life, the nature of that good life would have to be revealed by God. One such outstanding period was the period during which Christianity arose. This period corresponds to the closing years of the second stage in the development of the Jewish religion, when Judaism taught that God had revealed His will in the Torah. Influenced by this belief Christianity also assumed that how one should live could be learned only from God.

Today, when people no longer accept this belief, there is danger that they may once more despair of ever finding the secret to the good life. They are already coming to believe that civilization is headed for barbarism. Is it not perhaps the time for the Jewish people once more to come forward with a conception of ethics which will keep civilization alive?

To set forth a system of ethics, however, does not mean to express certain abstract ideas about righteousness and justice. The greatest teachers of ethics never taught generalities. The Prophets, for example, were concrete about the evils they condemned and the changes which they thought were necessary. It is not generalities which the world needs today, but ethical attitudes toward concrete issues. Jewish civilization has a tra-

dition of ethical teachers; should it not produce, in our day, individuals who see the problems clearly and who, with courage and insight, seek to solve them?

How can such individuals be produced? Jewish life has always been marked by the study of Torah. Torah study did not mean the study of abstract ideals; it meant the study of specific laws, cases and decisions. In our day, the ideal of Torah study might be translated into terms of adult educational groups, devoted to the study of contemporary ethical problems. If the practice of carrying on these study groups became a regular activity of Jewish men and women, in time certain conclusions would emerge. The Torah ideal in modern life involves the re-education of the adult Jew.

But not only the average Jew must concentrate his study energies on the ethical problems of the world. The scholars of the Jewish people must leave their ivory towers and come out into the arena of active life. Thus far, Jewish scholarship has meant digging into the remote past for interesting items of information. The present and its problems have been ignored by most Jewish scholars. Rabbis, social workers, teachers and lay leaders should make it their business to train themselves in the human sciences, so that they may help their fellow Jews and their fellow humans to lead the good life.

B. LAW: ETHICS IN ACTION

If Judaism had developed no law, it would have become an ethical philosophy, a set of generalizations about good and evil. With a law, Judaism became a civilization, for, through law, ethics is made part of the life of a people. Modern educators agree that the best way to learn is by doing. Judaism assumed this principle from the start. Its ethics was always translated into terms of action, and this action was dictated by law. By means of law, people are given approval or disapproval by the group in which they live. There is no way for a society to show its disapproval of certain actions, unless it has a body of law which expresses its standards and ideals.

That is why it was such a tragedy for Jews to have surrendered their Jewish law. One of the most powerful forces at their command has been given up. With law, the Jewish people might have been able to exert a strong influence over its members. If a group cannot pass judgment over its members, that group cannot impress its members with its standards of action.

But it is not too late for the Jews to revive the practice of holding court. Of course they will not be able to judge all kinds of cases. But many cases of domestic conflicts, suits entered by individuals against other individuals or against communal organizations, can and should be handled by courts of Jewish arbitration. Such courts actually operate in many cities in this country.

The decisions which courts of this kind hand down will, in time, constitute a body of law similar to that in England, known as the common law. The *compendia* of Jewish law which have come down to us from the past are largely unsuited to modern conditions. In Israel, of course, Jewish law will undergo a rebirth. But it would be a mistake to depend entirely upon Israel; Judaism must and can function in the diaspora. The judges who are called upon to render decisions will find that the conditions are so new and so different from those elsewhere in Jewish life or history, that many new decisions will have to be made. Perhaps out of this body of decisions the new *corpus* of Jewish law will be evolved.

### C. ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Jewish life today is challenged by those who believe that religion is the opiate of the masses; it makes people think that God is responsible for social evils, when these evils are really due to the injustice of man to man. Thus, instead of rebelling, people are satisfied to pray. The officials of religion work hand in hand with the oppressors of the masses, and help keep the masses in subjection. Even when religion is modernized and directed toward the betterment of mankind, it acts hypocritically; it seeks merely to give the impression of being in sym-

pathy with the downtrodden; actually, it helps keep the present conditions alive.

Unfortunately, many people are misled by this challenge to believe that religion has always been on the side of the most powerful. The Prophets certainly denounced their fellow men, and even their own rulers, for shedding innocent blood and for oppressing their people. The religion of the Prophets was not opium; it was dynamite, and the rulers knew it for the menace that it was to their positions. This is by no means the only instance in which religion was used by the downtrodden to re-enforce their claims to justice. The fact that religion has been used for evil purposes does not prove that it must always be used thus. After all, science, too, has been used for destruction; does that mean that science must be abolished?

The interpretation of religion given in this book should show that religion can be made to mean, not a helpless dependence upon God, but a faith that what *ought to be can be*. Such a faith does not necessarily mean that man depends upon supernatural aid. It means merely that the ideals which men cherish are not out of harmony with the nature of things. Now, in the past, it is true, religious people did not realize that these ideals could be achieved in this world, and they therefore believed that, in the world to come, those ideals would be achieved. But they never allowed themselves to believe that their hopes would be frustrated. They refused to believe that mankind was basically evil. If not now, they said, then at some future time peace and justice would reign.

This faith may have acted as an opiate, but under the conditions of life in those days an opiate was necessary. Without it they would have despaired altogether of any progress. In our day such an opiate is dangerous. Science has made it possible to produce enough food and goods for everyone to have enough. Today, therefore, we need a religion which will inspire us to combat the evils of society, and bring about the reign of justice and peace.

Jewish life must help Jews to achieve their ideals of social justice, if it is to gain the support of modern men and women.

If Judaism has no message to give to its young people concerning their social idealism, it would be admitting failure in a most vital aspect of present-day life. What contribution can Jewish religion make to a clearer understanding of what troubles the world today? What most people call economic justice really amounts to having the power to do what they alone consider to be right; that is, they deny that there is such a thing as justice. They insist that justice as such is merely a word, that in reality what is just and what is unjust depend upon what those who are in authority decide. From this point of view, the economic life is destined to be an endless struggle between man and man.

Here is the opportunity for Jews to spread the idea that life is not a mere struggle, that the philosophy of "the survival of the fittest" is a barbaric and inhuman one. The philosophy which ought to be preached is: "Make as many people as possible fit to survive." This philosophy implies that every human being is a sacred being, worthy of life and happiness, and that no human being should be used by another as a tool. Might is not right. Jewish religion has always emphasized this idea; Jews should apply it to the issues arising out of the social conflict.

Jewish religion should assert again that God is the power that makes for righteousness, and that the rule of might is godless and wrong. Violence was regarded by the Rabbis as the worst of all sins, and destined to destroy itself, for man, created in the image of God, ultimately rebels against violence. From the point of view of Jewish religion, the rule of right is *bound* to win out in the end. It is inevitable that God should triumph, that is, that the power for righteousness should triumph.

The struggle between the oppressor and the downtrodden should, therefore, not be interpreted as a sort of vicious contest between two groups, each seeking to subject the other, but should be regarded as part of the historic process that makes for the complete self-fulfillment of every individual. Whether the process will be a long or a short one, the law of God will surely prevail.

If ideas such as these were preached in the name of Jewish religion, Jews would find in Jewish religion what they are looking

for: the inspiration to carry on the struggle for justice and peace. And they would bring to that struggle greater strength than that which they could derive from a non-religious movement, for defeat and setbacks would never discourage them. They would realize that they were fighting with God, history and the nature of the world itself on their side.

## Chapter XXX

## THE NEW JEWISH EDUCATION

THE JEWISH CONCEPTION of Torah, as we have seen, conveys both the content of Jewish life and the process by which that life is transmitted. The name of that process is education. In view of the prime importance of education in the life of a people, it is evident that, in reconstructing Jewish life, Jewish education must play a vital role. The purpose of all that has gone before in this book has been to formulate a philosophy of Judaism which would bring new life into it. In other words, this philosophy is intended to strenghten the Jewish will to live in the hearts of modern Jews. Now, a people's will to live takes the form of the will to transmit the civilization of that people from generation to generation. That is why the revival of a people means the revival of its will to educate the young.

Jews in our day would experience that will to educate if they realized how indispensable Jewish education is for their children. Without Jewish education, the young are sad victims of maladjustment and conflict. Tradition is a means to a wholesome life. A tradition gives a person confidence, poise, dignity. Without it, he is like a plant uprooted, without a place for himself in history. With it, he knows exactly where he belongs in society and in the life of nations. To get a clear picture of what it means to know one's tradition, it would be well to keep in mind the image of a cultured Englishman. He has self-respect and self-assurance. He feels that he has a part in the long chain of a distinguished history. He feels that Shakespeare, Bacon, Newton, Keats, Shelley, Darwin, Huxley, etc., are, so to speak, his ancestors. He feels that it was his nation which was responsible for democracy, English literature, art, music, and philosophy. The knowledge of his nation's past enables him to go about the

world unafraid and unashamed to declare himself an Englishman, or to be indentified as an Englishman by others. So proud is he of his heritage that, wherever he finds himself, he attempts to impress on his environment the stamp of his culture and civilization.

Look about and observe how many Jews enjoy this same sense of self-respect and self-assurance. Pitifully few. How many Jews are so confident of themselves that they are unashamed to declare themselves Jews, or to seek to impress the stamp of their culture and civilization wherever they are? Very few, in our day. Most Jews suffer from a sense of inferiority. They are ashamed of their Jewishness. It is undoubtedly true that large numbers of Jews go about saying that they are "proud of being Jews." But it is very easy to penetrate beneath this armor of pretense. The Jews who shout loudest about how proud they are of being Jews are almost invariably the very ones who are ashamed of being Jews. A simple psychological law explains their overemphasis upon their pride. Everyone today is familiar with the phrase, "defense mechanism." This means that the "mechanism" which people devise in order to cover up their shame or confusion takes the form of an exaggerated pride or aggressiveness.

Many Jews are victims of this sense of inferiority. Why? Because, in their maladjustment, due to their ignorance, they suffer shame and humiliation on account of their Jewishness. There is no cure for this maladjustment except education. A knowledge of Judaism makes it impossible for a Jew to be ashamed of his Jewishness.

Jewish education, therefore, has a double function: it embodies, on the part of parents, the will to live as Jews, and it constitutes, for those who receive such education, the indispensable prerequisite for character. If Jewish education in our day, however, is to perform these two basic functions, it must be reconstructed along the very lines indicated as necessary for the reconstruction of Jewish life itself. Judaism, viewed as a civilization, requires a new type of Jewish education. Those for whom Judaism is only a religion, and who seek to organize their life solely around

the congregation, are satisfied to have their children receive only the Sunday School type of education. The Neo-Orthodox, for whom Judaism is a supernaturally revealed religion, seek to give their children a knowledge of sacred texts and to inculcate in them the habits of religious observance. Religio-culturists, for whom Judaism is a civilization, will seek to give their children a type of education which reflects this new conception of Judaism. The new Jewish education must permeate every aspect of one's life as a Jew. It must create an atmosphere congenial to Jewish living. It must lead to one's highest self-expression. It must inspire one to regard oneself as a responsible and functioning member of the Jewish people, sensitive to its needs, conscious of its past, devoted to its welfare, loyal yet critical. Jewish education must create strong, sound Jewish personalities.

To this end, it is necessary to depart from the conventional idea of education as consisting only of classroom work. Every phase of life, in the hands of the proper people, can become a means of exercising an educative influence. In Jewish education this means, for example, that it is not enough to know facts about Jewish history. Familiarity with the present realities of Jewish life is as essential as a knowledge of who Moses and Akiba were. The passion to participate in the solution of pressing Jewish problems is as essential as the ability to read Hebrew prose. Nothing human should be alien to Jewish education; nothing that touches the life of the Jew at any point should be untouched by the influence of Jewish education. In the chapter entitled "What Makes Judaism a Civilization," we have seen that these elements include language, laws, customs, folkways, folk traditions, folk arts, social structure. Jewish education, therefore, must include a study of Hebrew, of Jewish laws, customs, and folkways, the appreciation of folk traditions and the cultivation of Jewish religion, the fostering of Jewish artistic expression, and finally, the participation in Jewish communal life.

The new Jewish education must develop in young Jews a sense of pride. This pride, must however, be a balanced pride, leaning not in the direction of the sense of superiority. The knowledge of Jewish tradition should not depend for its value

upon its possible ability to enable the Jew to claim that he is better than his fellow man. Its value should consist in its ability to make the young Jew feel himself a part of the Jewish people. The need to feel oneself part of an historic people is a very deeply felt need. Whether that tradition is good, bad, or indifferent from a moralizing standpoint, its heroisms and events, its laws, struggles, tragedies, defeats, dramas and yearnings constitute the actual experience of the people; Jewish parents should want their children to feel that they are a part of this tradition. The most obscure peoples in the world find the drama of their own career, the courage of their own heroes, and the inspiration of their own poets enough reason for cherishing their tradition. There is surely enough of intrinsic worth in the Jewish tradition to supply the young Jew with drama and inspiration.

The new Jewish education must, furthermore, be so interpreted as to lead the young Jew to appreciate the importance of loyalty. Loyalty, as an abstract idea, can mean little to young people; loyalty to a cause can mean a great deal. It is through the channel of loyalty to a particular group, or people, or cause that loyalty in general comes to have meaning. A philosopher has said, "So be loyal to your own cause as thereby to serve the advancement of the cause of universal loyalty." Many Jews mistakenly imagine that if they betray their own people in the interests of "humanity" at large, they are acting virtuously. The truth is that "humanity" at large will benefit most if Jews learn to be loyal first to their own people. Certainly, the world can have little confidence in the loyalty of a Jew if he fails in his loyalty to his own people.

The new Jewish education, must, in addition, not conflict with the conclusions of modern science. If young Jews are to cultivate high regard for their own tradition, they must not be made to feel that the life of the Jewish people occupies, somehow, a different category from that which the life of other peoples occupies, or be led to believe that the laws which govern all society do not apply to the life of the Jewish people. They must not be called upon to make exceptions in the case of Judaism to the scientific laws which they learn from other

sources. If they are so called upon, conflict is bound to arise in their minds, and they are likely to resolve this conflict by coming to regard with contempt what they have learned in Jewish schools.

The new Jewish education must be bound up with a visible, tangible Jewish people. Jewish life in our day is so easily overlooked because the young Jew of our time sees so little of it. He goes about, in the streets, in the homes of his friends, in the theatre; he reads the daily press and current literature, and days may go by without his coming into direct contact with some concrete evidence of Jewish life. For that reason, it is necessary to bring the young Jew into intimate contact with the life of our people in Israel. There Jewish life pervades the whole of the Jew's consciousness. The very landscape, the calendar, the language, the routines of the people's social and economic life — all declare "The Jewish people lives!" If young Jews can be made sensitive to the existence and activities of Jews in Israel, they will be ever conscious of their belonging to a real, living, people, and of their identification with the historic tradition of their people.

Israel, however, can supply only to a limited extent this sense of the realness of the Jewish people. The new Jewish education must supplement Israel with a sense of the awareness of local Jewish life. The young Jew must be led into participation in the attempts to solve immediate Jewish problems. Communal-mindedness must be cultivated, not on the congregational scale alone, but on the scale of the whole community. An interest in, and a sense of responsibility for communal institutions must constitute a vital part of the young Jew's education. Not alone in the school, but at home, around the dinner table, in the living room, the young Jew must hear these problems discussed. Books, magazines, newspapers dealing with Jewish life should form part of the very furniture of the home. The pictures on the wall, the songs sung at home, should be part of the young Jew's education, to make him always aware that the Jewish people lives, as a throbbing, vibrant organism, and that he is flesh of its flesh and bone of its bone.

These are some of the qualities of the new Jewish education; they are offered here as guideposts. The full program which they suggest will undoubtedly, if carried through, give the Jewish child a rich and happy child-life as a Jew. Happy childhood memories are never forgotten; they will serve to develop a love for Jewish life and help solve many difficult problems which, as an adult, he will have to face. He will not have that gnawing sense of inferiority which ignorance fosters. He will not seek to overcome the hatred of non-Jews by false notions of superiority. Confronted by a hostile world, hearing all sorts of base accusations flung at him and his people, he will not come to believe what others say about him, and he will not be broken in spirit. A knowledge of his past and a love of his people will rescue him from the dread disease of self-hate, that searing blight which has killed the joy of living in so many Jews. He will have character — inner strength, dignity, and poise. He will be happy as a Jew.

CONCLUSION

## CONCLUSION

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### *Chapter XXXI*

#### CREATIVE JUDAISM — A PROGRAM

THE JEW LIVES TODAY in a world far different from that of his fathers. They had no doubts. They believed with the rest of the world that their salvation lay in a hereafter and could be attained by living in accordance with the will of God. Modern thought has deprived the Jew of this conception of salvation and, therefore, of what was formerly the principal justification for his loyalty to Judaism.

Even those Jews to whom Judaism is a habit as a result of home training and background find their loyalty strained. They are affiliated with congregations, but they are bored by the services. They take an active part in Jewish organizations, but are revolted by the futility, waste and lack of sincerity. There is little beauty in the Jewish life around them, and the wisdom in the heritage of Jewish literature is not accessible to them.

Especially difficult is it for those Jews to find themselves in Jewish life, who have vague childhood memories of Jewish life, but who have never had it interpreted to them on the adult level. These childhood memories have awakened within them and give them no rest. Judaism as constituted at present, offers them no field for the expression of their innermost selves.

The only adequate substitute for otherworldly salvation, which formerly motivated the loyalty of the Jew to his social heritage and satisfied his yearnings for self-fulfillment, is a creative Judaism. What must be done to render Judaism creative?

1. *Rediscover Judaism by learning to know its true scope and character:*

We must not regard it as a revealed religion which so transcends all laws of social life as to be completely unaffected by

them; nor must we consider the Jews as a religious community bound together only by a mission of promulgating the truth about the unity of God and the brotherhood of man. Equally erroneous is the view that would eliminate religion from Jewish collective life and stake the future of the Jewish people upon the spirit of nationalism.

We must recognize Judaism to be nothing less than a civilization, containing all the elements of a civilization: the social framework of national unity, centering on a particular land, a continuing history, a living language and literature, religious folkways, mores, laws and art. Jewish civilization must so function that, through it, the Jewish people will help to make the life of the Jew creative and capable of self-fulfillment. It must work through social institutions that answer to vital needs, and articulate itself in terms of ideals which are vital and relevant.

Jewish civilization must be able to assimilate the best in contemporary civilizations, in a deliberate and planned fashion, not in the spirit of yielding to their force or prestige, but in the spirit of cooperation.

Whatever changes in ideology, sanctions, practices or social organization such a development in Judaism involves must be evaluated by the extent to which such changes help Judaism to retain its continuity, its individuality and its organic character.

### 2. *Redefine the status and reorganize the communal life of the Jews:*

We are a people, by virtue of our consciousness of a common past, our aspiration toward a common future and our will-to-cooperate in the achievement of common ends.

Israel is essential if Judaism is to maintain its character as a civilization, for it serves as the symbol of the Jewish renaissance and as the center where essential Jewish creativeness will express itself in Hebraic forms.

Jewish communal life is essential for cooperation among Jews, organized in such a manner that all the activities of Jews shall be integrated into an organic unity. To such an organization, all

Jews who feel physical or spiritual kinship with the Jewish people should belong no matter what their personal philosophy may be.

Units in the communal organization should include, not only congregations, but groups centered about literary, artistic and social activities. The Jewish community should establish centers dealing with religious, philanthropic, social and educational problems, institute arbitration courts, record births, marriages, divorces and deaths, represent Jews before the non-Jewish community and defend Jewish rights.

The Jewish community should direct Jewish education for children and adults, from elementary levels to the levels of higher learning, and foster intensive Jewish home life.

### 3. *Reinterpret and vitalize our tradition:*

Jewish tradition must be viewed not as a series of fixed and static ideas, requiring conformity in thought and action, but as the story of the past of the Jew which he is made to feel is in a deep and true sense *his* story, in which certain events, persons, places, objects, in brief, certain *sancta* come to possess a vital interest for him.

The ideology of a people comprises its interpretation of these *sancta*; but in our day Jewish unity may be attained by the general reference to these *sancta*, and does not depend upon one uniform interpretation of them.

Whatever interpretations are given, however, if they are to bridge the gap between tradition and modernism, they must re-enforce the highest social and spiritual strivings of our day. As expression of the highest needs of the Jewish people and the spiritual reaction of Jews to the vicissitudes of life, such interpretations constitute Jewish religion for our day.

Customs and rites of a religious character comprise folk religion, the common spiritual denominator of the people, as distinguished from personal religion, which is essentially the world outlook which each person should achieve for himself. Folk religion can invest our daily habits with spiritual significance

by rendering them beautiful and meaningful. Folk religion, expressed in public worship, which is related to the ideology of the modern Jew, yet based upon traditional forms, may become a source of spiritual power.

In view of the entire presentation of Judaism as a civilization, Jews who seek to understand what it means to be "good Jews" should measure their loyalty not by their adherence to a creed, but by the extent to which they actually share certain "wants" which express an active desire to make Judaism a vital part of their lives. Such wants are the following:

1. We want Judaism to help us overcome temptation, doubt and discouragement.
2. We want Judaism to imbue us with a sense of responsibility for the righteous use of the blessings wherewith God endows us.
3. We want the Jew so to be trusted that his yea will be taken as yea, and his nay as nay.
4. We want to learn how to utilize our leisure to best advantage physically, intellectually and spiritually.
5. We want the Jewish home to live up to its traditional standards of virtue and piety.
6. We want the Jewish upbringing of our children to further their moral and spiritual growth and to enable them to accept with joy their heritage as Jews.
7. We want the synagogue to enable us to worship God in sincerity and in truth.
8. We want our religious traditions to be interpreted in terms of understandable experience and to be made relevant to our present-day needs.
9. We want to participate in the upbuilding of Erez Yisrael as a means to the renaissance of the Jewish spirit.
10. We want Judaism to find rich, manifold and ever new expression in philosophy, in letters, and in the arts.

11. We want all forms of Jewish organization to make for spiritual purpose and ethical endeavor.
12. We want the unity of Israel throughout the world to be fostered through mutual help in time of need, and through cooperation in the furtherance of Judaism at all times.
13. We want Judaism to function as a potent influence for justice, freedom and peace in the life of men and nations.

The desire to satisfy these wants involves a program calling for a degree of honesty and courage which adventure into all new, uncharted regions requires. If Jews seek to solve their Jewish problems with that honesty and that courage, the present crisis in Jewish life will prove to be the birth throes of a new era in the civilization of the Jewish people.