

**A NEW APPROACH TO THE  
PROBLEM OF JUDAISM**

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## FOREWORD

As adherents of Judaism, we are faced with a condition that does not let us live at ease. It compels us to readjust ourselves socially and intellectually. To leave that readjustment to chance is to invite moral chaos. We cannot afford to wait until a Sanhedrin, possessed of universal wisdom and representative of the multifarious shades of Jewish belief and practice, will agree upon some happy formula that will satisfy the whole of Israel. Nor do we look forward to any new gospel or revelation. There is only one way of saving Judaism, and that is to engage in associated endeavor with the avowed purpose of making Judaism function as a way of life. It is true, we have congregations. But membership in a congregation is prompted, for the most part, by the need

“to belong.” We must cultivate a type of collective effort which is impelled by a desire *to advance the cause of Judaism*. The two essays included in this booklet try to set forth the spirit in which a society for the advancement of Judaism must approach its task, and the prerequisites which such a society must meet, if it is to accomplish aught in the way of rendering Judaism a potent factor for individual and social regeneration.

M. M. K.

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A NEW HEART AND  
A NEW SPIRIT

## A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT

**T**HE business principle that nothing succeeds like success has led many well-wishers of Judaism to make light of its present crisis. That principle is by no means infallible. There are occasions when nothing succeeds like the truth. That is especially true in matters spiritual. Judaism is far more likely to win out in the end, if those who speak in its behalf will have the courage to tell the truth concerning its present status, instead of inflating the significance of a few sporadic evidences of its functioning. The truth is that Judaism is disintegrating. So rapid is the process of disintegration that unless it is stopped betimes Judaism will be past recovery.

The most heartbreaking disillusionment which we Jews have experienced in our entire history has been the one

following the removal of our political and civil disabilities. The least we expected was that we would henceforth find it easier to be Jews. The fact is that it never was so hard to be a Jew as it is nowadays.

The Emancipation has complicated the problem of Jewish living a hundredfold. We rejoice that we are no longer segregated from the rest of the world. But we have not yet learned how to prevent social contact and intercourse with the non-Jewish population from effacing our Jewish individuality. We have much more to apprehend from the changes that are going on in the social institutions and the thought life of the world about us than any other people. The new world outlook which merely shakes our neighbors out of their mental complacency gives our men of ability and influence an excuse for turning their backs on Judaism. The industrial revolution, which is forcing the rest of the world to abandon its ancient political

and economic standards, is reducing the social organism of the Jewish people to a human detritus. And, when we add to the disruptive forces, to which Jews are subject in common with other groups, the demoralization which must result from the mere uprooting of millions and transplanting them from one continent to another, we begin to realize the unprecedented character of the problem of Judaism.

In the meantime, the destruction of what we were wont to regard as Jewish traditions, Jewish standards of duty, Jewish ideals, goes on apace. Scarcely a Jew to-day but suffers from some kind of mental complex, usually the inferiority complex, due to spiritual maladjustment. The situation is becoming unbearable, and some way out must be found. There are those who choose the easiest way. They make up their minds to forget the Jewish past, to break with all Jewish associations, to immerse themselves completely in the life of the

majority. We have no moral right to condemn such a course as cowardly and treasonable to the best interests of mankind, unless we can prove that Judaism is equal to the task of liberating in the Jew the highest intellectual and spiritual forces that are latent within him.

Judaism cannot possibly release the highest potencies in the Jew unless its teachings be made compatible with fearless freedom of thought, and unless its institutions and practices are revised with a view to their utmost ethical effectiveness.

#### WHY THE REFORM MOVEMENT HAS FAILED

We are aware that the Reform Movement has tried to remold Judaism in accordance with those purposes. The leaders at least may be credited with a sincere desire to save Judaism from destruction. Have they succeeded? The criterion of a successful Jewish reforma-

tion would naturally be, Does it tend to make the Jew more Jewish? Who will venture to claim that result for the Reform Movement? It should not be difficult by this time to diagnose the failure of the Reform Movement. Two factors have contributed to that failure, one negative and the other positive. The negative factor was the omission to prepare the laity for changes in Judaism. To be capable of adapting any social or spiritual institution to new conditions of life and thought, we must evince new moral energy, an energy that expresses itself in a readiness for self-denial. Otherwise, convenience is liable to be given priority over principle. This has been the experience of the Reform Movement. It has allowed considerations of political and social status to dictate what shall or shall not be Judaism. It should have reformed the Jew before it attempted to reform Judaism. It should have inspired him with a new self-respect. It should have disciplined him into a sterner regimen of Jewish duty, at the

same time that it modified the content of Judaism.

The positive factor that has contributed to the failure of the Reform Movement has been its complete misconception of the nature and function of Judaism. It claims that Judaism is a religious system of life, a system which God has enabled the Jew to evolve for the good of mankind. To communicate that system of life is the Jew's destiny and mission. That conception of Judaism involved changing the status of the Jews from that of a people yearning for its lost homeland into an international organization at home everywhere. The function of that organization is to preach the unity of God, and to further the brotherhood of man. Such a mission would pledge us to active propaganda against trinitarian Christianity and against all forms of privilege and militarism. If that were taken seriously, it would be more dangerous to be a Reform Jew than to be the most violent

radical. Only a few daring spirits would venture to belong to an international organization of that kind. By setting up an impossible goal for the Jewish people, the Reform Movement has reduced Judaism to an absurdity.

The failure of the Reform Movement should not daunt us from trying again. Since most adjustments in human life proceed by the trial and error method, we should not be discouraged because the first trial happens to be an error. By avoiding the two fundamental mistakes of the Movement, we might hit upon a workable and satisfactory solution of the problem of Judaism.

Our first object must be to prepare ourselves mentally and morally for the necessary reconstruction of Judaism. We need a new influx of spiritual energy to be in a position to appreciate the implications of our problem. Unless we can get the Jewish layman to see in the problem of Judaism a challenge worthy



of his highest powers of intelligence and will, nothing that rabbinical conferences or institutions of learning can do is of much avail. To manifest that interest in a perplexing spiritual problem, the Jew must effect a complete volte-face in his attitude toward the things of the spirit. Otherwise, all efforts to vitalize Judaism are like trying to get one to breathe in a vacuum. The time has come when the Jew must give heed to the plea of the prophet Ezekiel, "Make unto yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. Wherefore shall ye die, O House of Israel?"

#### A NEW HEART AND A NEW SPIRIT

To acquire a new heart and a new spirit means to make new demands on life. If we experience wants that have been unknown to us, if we miss things we never missed before, we are, in a sense, newly born. In the realm of things material, we are content with little less than the very highest stand-

ards of excellence and comfort, whereas in things spiritual we are unduly modest in our demands. A minimum schedule is all that we legislate for ourselves, and in practice seldom live up even to that minimum. So long as we are smitten with a morally deadening wantlessness, we had better leave the problem of Judaism alone and attend to the Jew.

As a prerequisite to the revaluation of Jewish values, we should begin to feel the gnawing pains of spiritual hunger. We are not asking for that rare quality of soul which is found only in those who are attuned to cosmic harmonies that escape the average person. The hunger which we regard as the forerunner of a revitalized Judaism is inherent in every normal man and woman, except that we fool it with unwholesome sweetmeats.

#### THE HUNGER FOR TRUTH

There are various manifestations of spiritual hunger. Its most familiar ex-

pression is the desire for knowledge, not of business, or of machines, but of human life, of nature, of the world, of God. How seldom one hears our people deploring the fact that they have no time or patience to read a serious book, or that they are unable to keep up with the march of thought!

We have reached a stage where any large publishing house would hesitate to put out a book of Jewish interest, because it is common knowledge that we do not read anything that deals with Jews or Judaism. There is not a single periodical of Jewish interest that could survive long, if it were not for anti-Semitism and the social column. Do we maintain even one publication that in dignity and seriousness is on a par with, let us say, the large number of Catholic and Protestant weeklies and monthlies? The "Menorah Journal," which is the one illustrious exception to intellectual aridity in Jewish life in this country, is

forever struggling between life and death.

There are, alas, too few among us who can be reached by an appeal to conserve our spiritual possessions. The general principle seems to be that a Jew to be worth saving must be stranded, sick or dying. Any movement that attempts to bring to our youth the knowledge of Judaism is doomed to inadequacy of support. At the present time, Jews have the opportunity of making important archeological discoveries in Jerusalem and other places in Palestine. We look in vain to our people to finance research expeditions and to give the Jewish scholars an opportunity to contribute to the knowledge of Jewish antiquities.

#### THE YEARNING FOR FAITH

Another form by which we identify spiritual hunger is the never-despairing hope to discover the inherent rightness and goodness of life. When we make

that discovery we acquire the deep abiding faith, without which the soul knows no peace. Not every one is blessed with that faith, but we can all at least yearn for it. The yearning itself exerts a humanizing influence.

If we have no longing for inward peace, if the very worth of a serene soul escapes us, what interest can we have in receiving from Judaism the gift of faith in a benign Power that shapes our ends? It is almost impossible to live in an occidental civilization, with its drive and headlong impetuosity, without being caught up and made to fall in step with its vast cohorts. That is all the more reason why we should yearn for that self-command which might enable us to hold back at times and let the swift procession, with its futilities and its ephemeral excitement, pass us by and leave us secure in the possession of our souls. Many of our people imagine they are following the American ideal of "the strenuous life" because they are

"all nerves" about something or other. They have become ashamed of serenity, as though it were a sign of effeminacy or weak-mindedness. This caricature of the American ideal must give way to a desire to return to Judaism's ideal of the simple life, to a life of inward calm and self-control.

#### THE AWAKENING OF CONSCIENCE

The same secularizing process that has led to the abandonment of the ideal of inward peace has, in a large measure, also dulled the edge of conscience. We live in an age when a powerful reaction has set in against the exaggerated sense of sin under which mankind labored in the past. But the lay mind is too preoccupied to draw the distinction between removing the incubus of imaginary transgressions and destroying the very sense of sin. Having learned from hearsay that much of what was formerly regarded as sin was merely blind prejudice and unreasonable tabu,

the average person readily jumps at the conclusion that sin is one of those antiquated ideas that ought to be thrown into discard.

Or, if our sensitiveness to sin has not been deadened quite to that extent, we have become adepts in the fatalistic philosophy that we are not our own masters. Armed with a few phrases about our helplessness and our inability to change either the world or human nature, we put conscience to sleep. Is it not evident that mankind would be thrust back into the chaos from which it has been painfully struggling to emerge if it were to lose the sense of sin? If the Jew is to play his part in bringing light and order into the world, he must reinstate the sovereignty of the conscience. As a prerequisite to such an achievement, he must dread callousness to wrong-doing, and realize that moral insensibility is a form of paralysis of the spiritual nerve centers. To yearn for the stirrings of conscience, to be able to

pray devoutly with the Psalmist, "Create in me, O God, a clean heart, and renew within me a steadfast spirit," is an evidence that one's soul is still alive.

Furthermore, if Judaism has taught us anything, it should have imbued us with the truth that man is not only an individual soul, but also a member of society. Judaism denies us peace either with ourselves or with God, unless we live on terms of peace and co-operation with our neighbors. Let us be honest with ourselves and analyze to what extent Judaism functions in our lives as a stimulus to fair play, to what extent it makes us revolt at extravagance that wastes goods and services whereby thousands might be kept from starvation. Does the Judaism we profess provoke us into rebellion against the orgy of materialism which places a higher value upon the production of things than upon the conservation and improvement of human life? Do we take the teachings of our prophets seriously

enough to assume the slightest responsibility for averting the disaster which must come with the next war? Does Judaism really make us anxious, desperately anxious, to banish war from the earth?

THE WRONG NOTION OF JUDAISM

Are we, then, to infer that Jews are deficient in spiritual qualities, that their souls are less sensitive to the finer things of life than are the souls of their neighbors? Who will deny that a people which, under the most adverse handicaps, furnishes modern civilization with a physicist that eclipses Newton, with a philosopher that dethrones Aristotle, with a psychologist that outstrips James and Ribot, with a host of poets, painters, sculptors and authors of first magnitude, that such a people is gifted with a greater share of spiritual capacity than any other nation upon earth? But the great misfortune is that practically none of that genius is applied to Judaism or Jewish life. To what is that due if not

to the erroneous idea which has been given currency that Judaism is a religion only, a matter of creeds and precepts, which you either obey or ignore, but which affords no scope for the wealth of intellectual and social interests that comprise modern culture.

What does Judaism mean to the average layman? A few stories from the book of Genesis vaguely remembered, the duty of believing in one God, keeping away from ham and shellfish, attending synagogue at least on the High Holy Days, and saying Kaddish after a departed parent. In the natural course of things even these few duties grow irksome. From that state of mind to the conclusion that Judaism is altogether superfluous is but one step.

Is it conceivable that what is Judaism to most of us should have moved two-thirds of mankind to give up their own cults and worships, and acknowledge the God of Israel as the only true God? Are

we to imagine that for the sake of the few misunderstood ideas and mechanical habits that comprise our conception of Judaism our ancestors braved exile, torture and death? Is it possible that for the sake of that unorganized medley of ill-digested doctrines, that for the spasmodic intermittent religiosity which we nowadays designate as Judaism, many more generations will be willing to endure the vexations and annoyances of being Jews? The prevalence of the distorted notion of Judaism accentuates the second fatal mistake of the Reform Movement. It is the Reform Movement that is largely responsible for that misconception, because it took a rich, cultural and social life and boiled it down to a platitudinous religious philosophy. Even if that philosophy had something new to say it could not be expected to make itself felt in the life of the ordinary Jew. We hardly need Reinach to remind us that you cannot have a people of fifteen million philosophers.

Moreover, Judaism is not a religious philosophy but a religious civilization. It is a cultural and spiritual complex of language, literature, history, customs, social institutions, organized about a conception of God which has the most far-reaching social and spiritual implications for human life of all times.

A civilization is a spiritual entity. It is the soul of a people. But as every spirit is the spirit of something, and a soul, the soul of something, a civilization cannot subsist without a people. Hence, there can be no Judaism without a Jewish people. The conviction which is essential to being a Jew consists, accordingly, in voluntarily identifying one's self with the living organism of the Jewish people.

A literary critic proposes a fourth dimension to Criticism. Hitherto, Criticism has been wont to ask about literature, "Is it good?" "Is it true?" "Is it beautiful?" The critic suggests a fourth

question, "Is it alive?" The same may be said of Judaism. It must be more than true, good, and beautiful. It must, first of all, be *alive*, and it is alive only to those who live it as a civilization.

#### JUDAISM AS A CIVILIZATION

Judaism is the spirit of a nation, and not the cult of a denomination. When we accept Judaism as a cult only, we consider it our duty to help maintain a synagogue, to attend services occasionally, and to refrain from intermarrying with non-Jews. But when we accept it as a civilization, we cultivate the knowledge of Israel's past so as to make that past an integral part of our personal memory; we dedicate ourselves to the furtherance of Israel's career, beholding in that career our own personal future; we accept, as far as in us lies, the responsibility for the material and spiritual welfare of all of world Jewry. To be a Jew in that sense is to be imbued with a Jewish consciousness that reaches

down into the secret places of the subconscious.

At no time in the past was Judaism treated by Jew or Gentile as anything else than a civilization. The confusion as to the true character of Judaism is a by-product of the Emancipation. Out of fear lest we be charged with hyphenated loyalty to the country of which we are citizens, our timid leaders and teachers have tried to reduce the Jewish civilization to a cult.

We now realize that their fear was totally unwarranted. The social and spiritual life of the normal human being consists of many loyalties. We are loyal to our parents, to our homes, to our friends, to our business associates, as well as to our country. It is only in case of conflict that the question arises as to which loyalty shall have precedence. But the Jewish people to which every Jew must give his allegiance is a people that has no *raison d'être* unless it find a

peaceful way of composing all its differences with the rest of the world. Why, then, deny the true character of our spiritual heritage for the sake of impossible contingencies? Judaism must remain what it was, the civilization of the Jewish people, or admit that its day is over.

PREREQUISITES TO JUDAISM  
AS A CIVILIZATION

There are, however, a number of conditions which must be fulfilled before we can think of Judaism in terms of a civilization. First, we must participate in the renaissance of the Hebrew language and literature; secondly, we must give unstinting support to all forms of Jewish scholarship; and, thirdly, we must accept the rebuilding of Palestine as the foremost religious duty of the hour.

CULTIVATION OF HEBREW

No one who has the right instinct about the needs of Judaism at the

present time can fail to note that the knowledge of Hebrew has become indispensable to being a Jew. The rabbinic precept that a parent must teach his child to speak Hebrew from early infancy must henceforth be the underlying principle of Jewish education. The Jew to whom Hebrew is "Greek" is the father of an indifferent Jew, and the grandfather of an apostate Jew. There is something about the Hebrew language which gives the Jew a "Neshamah-Yethera," an oversoul, for in that language are stored the joys and the sorrows, the triumphs and the defeats, the gropings after truth, and the struggle for the light, experienced by the Jewish people in the course of thirty centuries.

Our problem is, to a large extent, how to get the "feel" of the Jewish people, how to visualize its reality. Ordinarily, it is a land that impresses us with the reality of a people. In the past we succeeded in keeping alive this sense of our people's reality, even in the Dias-



pora, by living segregated from the rest of the world. Men and women of the older generation still remember the Jewish Ghettos in which they were raised. That contact with Jews in the mass will keep them Jewish more than all abstract teaching and preaching. But what can we do to give our children whom we bring up in neighborhoods where one sees little of Jewish life a sense of intimacy with the Jewish people? The very term *Jewish People* is to them an abstraction. The only instrument at our disposal to compensate for the loss of Jewish contacts is the Hebrew language. When we teach the child a language, he instinctively senses the reality of the people to which the language belongs, and at the moment that he pronounces a word or sentence in that language he feels himself at one with that people.

The Hebrew language can supply the element of unity that is fast disappearing from Jewish life. Until the Eman-

ipation, all Jews practically thought alike and acted alike. Such uniformity cannot be re-established, and, perhaps, would no longer be desirable, if it could. Yet, without something to hold together the different elements in Jewry, the Jewish people would soon pass out of existence. For a time, the pogroms may act as a unifying force. Or, it may be that Jews will federate locally to maintain their poor. But is Jewish unity forever to be buttressed by suffering and poverty? Given, however, the Hebrew language, and all Jews will know themselves as one people, no matter how they differ in mental background or religious belief.

We were wont to glory in our past achievements, and to regale in dreams of our future; but what use are we making of our present opportunities? Mere dependence upon the past is spiritual parasitism. Mere reliance upon the future is a spiritual gamble. Unless we possess the vitality to turn to good account the

opportunities which the present offers, we may as well bow ourselves off the world's stage. No one can gainsay the fact that Jews, as individuals, have taken advantage of the freedom to give full play to their powers, and that the number of those who have achieved distinction in life-walks from which Jews had hitherto been shut out is legion. What, however, have the Jews as a people done within the last hundred years to place beyond doubt their possession of spiritual energy? Have the Jews as a people created anything cultural or spiritual since the days of the Emancipation? Is not the revival of the Hebrew language the sole proof that Israel's vitality is still unexhausted? How abashed we should stand before the world to-day, if we had not the renaissance of the Hebrew language to point to as a guarantee of our spiritual productivity, especially as we have created nothing which is specifically Jewish in art, ethics, philosophy or religion during the last century.

The renaissance of the Hebrew language is typical of the power of self-adjustment which the Jewish people still possesses. It is the most incontrovertible evidence of the vitality of the Jewish spirit. Modern Hebrew has succeeded where Jewish law and ritual have failed. It has demonstrated the possibility of Jewish life remaining identical and continuous while assimilating the best that there is to modern thought and civilization. Out of the ancient threads, modern Hebrew has woven new textures of truth and idealism adapted to the intellectual and spiritual needs of the most progressive men and women of the present day.

In the words of Zangwill, "Language is the chief index of life. As no man is dead so long as the mirror put to his lips reveals a breath, so no race is extinct so long as there comes from its lips the breath of speech. A people that speaks is not dead; a people that is not dead speaks."

THE TASK OF JEWISH SCHOLARSHIP

A second prerequisite to the functioning of Judaism as a way of life is the encouragement of Jewish scholarship. Recent developments in the thought world have made it necessary to place the stimulation of Jewish scholarship on a par with the renaissance of the Hebrew language and the upbuilding of Palestine. We refer to those developments which threaten the continuity of Judaism. What makes Judaism continuous if not the fact that our life as Jews is determined by our mind-picture of Judaism's beginnings? Until recently, it never occurred to us to question the truth of the mind-picture which tradition has transmitted to us. But with the advent of Higher Criticism, that mind-picture has been reduced to a dissolving view. So far, only the negative conclusions of biblical scholarship have trickled through to the popular mind. Every tyro is ready to tell you that the spiritual genealogy of Israel has been impugned. Our Jewish intel-

lectuals, who otherwise know nothing about Judaism, are somehow aware that the traditional account of its past has been challenged. Hence, it is urgent that Jewish scholars and thinkers throughout the world be immediately drafted to apply themselves to the task of formulating an intelligible, reliable and relevant account of the actual origin and growth of Judaism. Only then will we be in a position to know what methods to employ in its further development.

Our history falls into three millennia. As a rule, Jewish scholars have occupied themselves with the last two millennia. We cannot be grateful enough for what they have done to give us a picture of Jewish life during the long night of Exile which, in most people's minds, is remembered chiefly as fit material for lamentations. Their task is far from complete. The vast store of Genizah fragments and manuscripts of Jewish interest throughout the great libraries

of the world are still waiting to be deciphered and interpreted. But of immediate importance to Judaism is the task of reconstructing the history of our people during the first millennium of its existence. It was then that our people was creative spiritually. That is the most significant part of the Jewish past. Our claim to spiritual achievement is based primarily upon what we accomplished then. We can, therefore, ill afford to evade the issue which has been raised by Higher Criticism with regard to what actually occurred during the first millennium of our history.

How shall Judaism meet the challenge of Higher Criticism? Merely to protest against its methods and inferences on the ground that they are inspired by hatred of Judaism will not add to the prestige of our faith. After all, it is that same method which, when used by scholars like Krochmal, Rappaport, Zunz, Graetz and Schechter, has brought to light episodes and personalities in

Jewish history that had almost fallen into oblivion. It is high time that Jewish scholars should not be afraid of knowing the Bible. When Jewish scholars will know the Bible, the true story of the Jewish past will be told. And when that story will be told, the Jew will have no less reason to be proud of the Jewish past than were his ancestors who needed miracles and theophanies to convince them that Israel was the favorite of God. Other things being equal, the Jewish scholar is likely to have a keener and more sympathetic insight in matters that concern the Jew than the Gentile scholar, and should therefore be better qualified to appraise at their true worth the forces that made it possible for Judaism to play the great spiritual rôle in the history of civilization. The masses of the people may not at first be able to appreciate the untiring labor and devotion that is involved in restoring our spiritual genealogy. Let, however, the seminaries, the University in Jerusalem, and other Jewish institutions of

higher learning make solid contributions to the knowledge of the Jewish past in all its manifestations, and the entire intellectual world will take notice. We would no longer be characterized as the pariah of the nations. And what is even more important, our own young men and women would regain their Jewish self-respect. One thing is certain: we would at last have an authentic account of the beginnings of the Jewish people which we would not hesitate to put into the hands of serious-minded Jews who, if they are to reckon with Judaism, want facts and not fiction.

PALESTINE THE GUARANTEE OF  
JUDAISM'S FUTURE

Most indispensable, however, as a prerequisite to reckoning with Judaism as a civilization is to feel convinced that the Jewish people has a future. To be sure, the type of future upon which we can pin our faith is other than that for which our fathers yearned when they

found themselves in a state of helplessness. The future for which they hoped was scarcely of this earth. It was some dream of heavenly bliss which was little more than a psychic compensation for their deprivations and sufferings here on earth. They dreamt of a personal Messiah coming on clouds of glory amidst the trumpeting of hosts of angels, and of Israel being brought back to its ancient home by the nations of the world, who would repent of their rebellion against Israel's God, and of their cruelty to His chosen people. In place of what, at best, is only idle dreaming and, at worst, nothing more than pious babbling, we should zealously strive to make Palestine the home of a Jewish civilization. The yearning to re-establish the Jewish people must come as the logical consequence of a frank and honest facing of the fact that Judaism can no longer function, that it is certain to perish from inanition, unless it be rooted once again in the soil whence it sprang.

If our interest in Judaism goes no further than to wish that there should always be a number of individuals in the world who will be known as Jews, we may depend on it that our wish will be fulfilled. But if what we want is that those who will be known as Jews should enrich the world with their ideas, their ideals, and their example, and do so not only as individuals but collectively, by reason of their Jewish life, then it is futile to expect that kind of Judaism ever to thrive in the Diaspora, either here or elsewhere. That kind of Judaism is possible only where Jews can maintain their group life and social autonomy, and where, by reason of their being in the majority, they can enjoy cultural predominance. That kind of Judaism is feasible only in Palestine.

A few dreamers, like Dubnow and Kallen, look forward to emancipated Jewry becoming socially autonomous in the Diaspora. This is as little possible as that the sun should rise in the

west. It presupposes that the Occidental nations will adopt the philosophy that the State is a federation of cultural groups. That runs counter to the trend of political development in most countries, particularly in the United States. The case of the Poles, the Czechs, or the Irish is not to the point. They all have their own territory upon which they have lived as distinct nationalities for many centuries. And even they do not expect to develop their own culture anywhere except in their own land. The Jews, however, can claim no territory as their own anywhere in the Diaspora. They must, therefore, become integrated with the various peoples among whom they live. The Jews cannot ask any nation, that on principle refuses to become a community of cultural or national communities, to reverse its policy. To become a nation of cultural commonwealths, America would have to forget her past and start life anew. And she dreads nothing so much, and perhaps justly, as to invite the dissensions that

have convulsed those European commonwealths which consist of multitudinous cultural groups.

One must, indeed, be wilfully blind not to see the hand of Providence in the opportunity that has been given us to save Judaism at the very moment that the process of attrition is beginning to menace its existence. But to believe in Providence is to become its willing instrument. And to become the instrument of Providence, we must strive zealously to make Palestine the home of a cultured, spiritual and progressive Israel that will evolve the kind of civilization which will be recognized by all as the kingdom of God upon earth.

Twenty-five hundred years have elapsed since Ezekiel pleaded with the Jewish people, "Wherefore shall ye die, O House of Israel?" Apparently his plea was not in vain. Among the exiles that had wept by the rivers of Babylon

there were some, at least, who did not say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost." The faithful remnant that did not know what it is to despair or surrender still survived. They did not sit with folded arms. They did all they could to save and augment the civilization they had brought with them. They took every possible measure to prepare Israel for a second chance to make history in the domain of the spirit. When that chance came, it found the Jewish people possessed of a new soul that was forever rid of its pagan proclivities.

The experiences we are passing through bear a strong resemblance to the experiences of our ancestors who were within hearing of Ezekiel's voice. There are many among us, too, who say as of old, "We are clean cut off from the House of Israel." But there are still more who affirm, "I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord." They who have faith in Israel's future will

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give themselves no rest until the cause of Judaism will be bound up with the cause of human progress and idealism, and Israel will be ready to take its place for the third time among the peoples of the world as the standard bearer of a new spiritual civilization.

THE MEANING OF TORAH



## The Meaning of Torah

**W**HEN we speak of Torah to the average Jew, he thinks of the large parchment scrolls that are dressed in velvet and adorned with silver crown and breastplate, and that are deposited in the synagogue ark built specially for them. He probably recalls his nervousness when he was honored by being called up to the "Almemar." The fear of forgetting the benediction or making a "faux pas" in the Mi Sheberakh is still vivid in his mind. When we allude to "Talmud Torah," which, literally translated, means the study of the Torah, his mind goes back to some dingy Heder where little boys would rush in pell-mell to take their turns in reading a few verses out of a much-fingered prayer book or Bible. Those who still remember Jewish life on the lower East Side connect the study of Torah with a grimy Beth Hamidrash, where a number of old

men sway back and forth over large, exotic volumes of Hebrew text, repeating in a quaint singsong some incomprehensible lore. Such mental associations are little more than a caricature of the real significance that the Torah had for the Jew until recently.

CULTURE AGLOW WITH PASSION  
FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

We have to go back to Jewish life of the past to appreciate what the Torah meant to the Jew. Torah then represented all that we now understand by moral wisdom. It embraced everything that we now distinguish as history, poetry, religion, philosophy, ethics and law. It signified culture aglow with a passion for righteousness. The study of Torah was the worthiest occupation in which man could engage. No wonder that one of the ancient sages, describing the Torah in Platonic hyperbole, said that when God wanted to create the world He followed the plan laid

down in the Torah, thereby making moral order and purpose the basic law of the world.

Neither creed nor ritual of the most exalted kind could have saved the Jewish people from disintegration. If the Torah had not occupied the same place in the life of the Jew that culture occupies in the life of the modern man, the sole effect of persecution would have been to stamp out whatever idealism kept the Jewish spirit alive. It was a spiritual inheritance which helped to develop in the Jew the highest human and social faculties. The Torah was the chief humanizing element in his life.

From being synonymous with culture in its most comprehensive sense, Torah has shrunk for most Jews to a mass of antiquated writings which have no relevance to life. This is why only about one out of every five Jewish children has some inkling of what it is to be a Jew. This is why it is only the exceptional

parent who takes an interest in the Jewish education of his child. This accounts for entire congregations not having a single member able to recite the benediction over the Torah. To this misconception of Torah we owe the ignorance of Judaism on the part of some of the most prominent communal leaders. This failure to appreciate the true function of Torah is responsible for rabbis being compelled to become second-rate reviewers of the latest novels and plays, instead of first-rate Jewish scholars.

**TORAH AS LIFELONG MORAL  
EDUCATION**

A Torahless Judaism may hang on to life for a generation or two, but its end is inevitable. Hence, our problem is what to do to reinstate the Torah in the life of the Jew. To be sure, we cannot any longer expect the Torah to be utilized by the Jew as the sole humanizing and civilizing agency. We may, however, so interpret its scope and function as to give it first place among the ethical

and cultural influences that shape his life. Why limit Torah to the study of texts, all important as those texts are, when in reality Torah represents a living and continuing process rather than a final attainment? Torah should remind us of the truth that *Judaism can function as a way of life only so long as the Jew is engaged in a lifelong process of moral education.* The duty of Torah should signify the duty of treating life as an art which it is our business to keep on perfecting. Like all arts, the art of life can be perfected only by taking thought. When our people will accept this larger significance of Torah, they will inevitably go back to the classic literature of the Jewish people; for, you cannot touch upon any phase of the problem of life without reckoning with the wisdom and experience of Israel as embodied in our Sacred Writings.

This truth that lifelong moral education is the paramount religious duty of

the human being is far-reaching enough to constitute a world mission, if we are looking for one. No one takes us seriously when we boast that we are entrusted with the mission to teach righteousness. But if we were to adopt as our mission the learning of righteousness, we would, no doubt, render a much needed service to the cause of civilization.

THE IDEAL OF TORAH AS APPLIED  
TO THE CHILD

This conception of Torah would revolutionize most of our present notions of moral and spiritual education. It would open up new vistas, and reveal new opportunities for the character training of our children. Instead of regarding the religious school, with its milk-and-water curriculum, with its namby-pamby moralizing, as the primary, if not sole, agency in developing ethical conduct and a wholesome outlook upon life, our eyes would be opened to the fact that there is not a moment in the waking

life of the child when he does not receive impressions which determine the bent of his character. We would at once proceed to overhaul the religious schooling we give our children. We would demand that their religious studies should have relevance to their every-day life, and to the rôle that they will have to play as Jews and as citizens. We would make it possible for the Talmud Torah schools to engage teachers who do not adopt teaching in Jewish schools as a stepping-stone to more remunerative professions, but to whom imbuing children with a love and understanding of Judaism is a sacred calling. It would never occur to us to postpone the religious education of our children until a few months before their Bar Mizvah or confirmation, and then stuff their minds with a number of unrelated historical facts, some creeds and moral truisms, or make them drudge for several months in learning how to chant mechanically a portion from Scripture. This is what many parents consider giv-

ing their children a good Jewish training.

We should then learn to evaluate aright the significant part played in the shaping of our children's character by the home environment and by their playmates. If parents were aware how the most casual remarks and opinions which they pass about people exercise a greater influence than a good deal of formal instruction in ethics and religion, if parents realized that by their example they are apt to nullify the effect of the most efficient character training which their children might receive outside of the home, they would be much more wary of what they say and do. The choice of companions for our children on the basis of wealth would give way to choice on the basis of moral worth. We would probably lose the taste for social climbing; for nothing works such moral havoc upon children as the eagerness of parents to shine in the reflected

light of those that have more money than they have.

#### THE DISCOVERY OF THE CHILD

But by far the most important effect of the ideal of Torah upon our conception of child training would be that we would begin to comprehend what the child means for the civilization of the race. Such appreciation would be tantamount to the discovery of the child. We may be said to discover the child when it dawns upon us that in the child God gives humanity a chance to make good its mistakes, and to fulfill its fondest dreams. As soon as we make that discovery, we place the child at the focus of all spiritual and social endeavor. This is in accord with the spirit of Judaism which has ordained numerous rites and moral provisions with an eye to the development of the child. The Torah is especially interested in having the child recognize the power of God. In placing such emphasis upon the proper upbringing

ing of the child, Judaism proves its intuition of the child's contribution to the development of human society. It is now recognized that the child, by means of his prolonged infancy, brought into being the institution of the family, which is at the basis of all civilization. It will, no doubt, again be the child that will serve as the stimulus to a peaceful reorganization of the social order on a basis of freedom and justice.

In order that this may not remain an idle dream, the State, which now claims the prerogative of compelling and controlling the child's education, must be made to discharge its educational function in a manner that is conducive to the furtherance of the highest spiritual interests of the child. The ideal of Torah should compel us to place ourselves in the vanguard of every movement that would utilize the system of compulsory education as a means of bringing about a new day and a better world order. No civic duty can be more important than

joining in the demand that every child be given an adequate schooling. We must urge that the public schools utilize their vast resources, their immeasurable opportunities, their rich subject-matter, to teach our children the art of living. The crusades that break out spasmodically to introduce, or to abolish, the mechanical reading of a few verses from the Bible are totally devoid of educational import. It were far more honest and profitable to insist that the public schools should make a serious effort to cope with the problem of character training.

Our children are taught history, geography, civics and kindred subjects apparently with the purpose of indoctrinating them with the view that the status quo is the millennium, and that competition, intolerance, national boasting and bigotry are the last word in patriotic virtue. Educational authorities should be made aware that, more than anything else, parents want their chil-

dren to acquire during the years of elementary training the qualities of honesty, fair play, moral courage, and, above all, kindness and consideration for human beings, regardless of color, creed or nationality. This is the inarticulate prayer of every father and mother. If this prayer were heeded, our entire national life would undergo in a single lifetime a transformation such as all the religious bodies and all the social reform organizations would never dream of bringing about in a century.

#### THE PROBLEM OF THE ADOLESCENT

Assuming that the moral education of the child has been well taken care of, a new problem confronts us when the child passes into the youth. When the physical and mental powers mature, personality, with all of its mysterious forces, comes into being. The phenomenon of adolescence, with its need for readjusting the ideas acquired during the years of childhood, is probably accompanied,

especially in the case of sensitive youth, by severer mental struggle in modern times than was ever the case in the past. Adolescence, which spells a storm and stress period in the life of the Gentile youth, is nothing less than a dangerous crisis in the life of the Jewish youth. The former has only himself, his acquired habits and ideas, to contend with; the latter has, in addition, a hostile environment to contend with.

#### THE PROBLEM OF THE JEWISH YOUTH

The Jewish student is the Jewish problem incarnate. No wonder the Yiddish writer "Sholom Aleichem" in dramatizing his theme "It is Hard to be a Jew" took as his main character a Jewish student about to be graduated from a University. "Sholom Aleichem" gives us, however, only one half the story of that young man's life when he depicts all his troubles as due to anti-Semitic prejudice. If he had penetrated more deeply into the young man's soul he

would have discovered a raging conflict of violent emotions. Inwardly, the Jewish youth is tormented by doubt as to the truth and worthwhileness of the religious and moral ideals he had been taught, in his childhood, to respect. Outwardly, he is exposed to the baneful influence of evil companions who hold up his scruples to ridicule. His studies at college are by no means calculated to strengthen his faith in tradition and in the authority of moral standards. The college regards its task as ended when it imparts objective and scientific information, and pays but little attention to the effect which that information has upon character. Thus left without guidance in the evaluation of the knowledge received, the young man converts his half-comprehended information into slogans that give sanction to all sorts of wild escapades.

With no responsible Jewish community or institution to make provision for the youth's spiritual development

during those critical years, what else is to be expected than that he should be graduated as a confirmed iconoclast, to whom nothing is sacred, who holds all virtue in derision, and who makes mock of piety and self-control? What use can he have for the Jewish people when he is convinced that Judaism is a misfortune? In fact, he is something of an anti-Semite himself. He cannot forgive his fellow-Jews the vexations and annoyances that he had to endure on their account during his student career. His self-centered, materialistic and vulgar attitude toward life, in turn, furnishes the college authorities with a standing excuse for wanting to cut down the number of Jews at college.

The experience which the Jewish student goes through is typical of what all Jewish young persons have to encounter in the various walks of life. They all come out from the struggle morally scarred. The iron enters their soul at an age all too young. Disillusioned



sooner, by far, than other youths as to the sincerity of men's professions of idealism and good-will, the Jewish youth becomes a hardened cynic. He adopts the swagger of the man of the world, and boasts of indulging his appetites without let or hindrance.

It will be said that this attitude of the Jewish adolescent is confined to those who have received no spiritual training whatever in their childhood. This, however, is not the case. The most conspicuous instances of revulsion against religion and morality will oft be found among those who, as children, received an intense and careful religious upbringing. Many parents recall the remarkable piety which a son or a daughter displayed as a child. They love to harp upon the eagerness with which their child would seize every opportunity to recite a benediction, or to attend the synagogue. But as soon as the child grew up and left the parental roof, there was no trace left of that piety.

This almost universal experience of parents should by this time have taught them that nowadays the responsibility for their children's spiritual development is augmented on the day that their children are confirmed or become Bar-Mizvah.

The recognition of this fact, which is, in a sense, the same as acknowledging that Torah as a process of moral education must be resumed with greater vigor during the years of adolescence, imposes upon us a twofold task of stupendous proportions: One is to organize new subject material for Jewish youth education; and the other, to create the machinery whereby Jewish education might be carried far into the years of adolescence.

#### WE NEED NEW JEWISH CONTENT

At present we are sadly deficient in both material and men. The material at our disposal is not in a condition to an-

swer the practical need of inspiring and guiding youth. It has to be reorganized, reinterpreted and rendered palatable. Let me make clear what is meant by the need of new subject matter. Until recent years, there was no material in the field of Jewish history that might serve as a source of both information and inspiration. Came along the Jewish historians, of whom Graetz is the best known, and created Jewish history in the modern sense of the term. The gathering of historical material has only begun. Even what we have has to be worked over into more tractable form, and presented with more careful regard for scientific accuracy and new social interests. And what is true of the outward facts of Jewish life is still more true of the norms and ideals of Jewish life. Seven hundred years ago Maimonides found it necessary to write "*A Guide to the Perplexed*" to deal with the outstanding philosophical problems of his day, and a compendium of Jewish prac-

tice to present in systematic form the duties incumbent upon the Jew. How much more are we, to-day, in need of systematic presentation of the case for Judaism, or of compendia of the duties essential to leading a Jewish life?

More important even than the production of commentaries and adaptations of the ancient material of Judaism is new Jewish content. Such content cannot be made to order. Creative effort cannot be called forth at will. It takes the happy combination of favorable social conditions, urgent demand on the part of the people, and the presence of creative genius to produce new cultural subject-matter. The modern Hebrew literature, which is the initial product of Jewish creative talent in modern times, is an indication of what rich literary content could be added to the treasures of Jewish thought, if there were the slightest evidence of popular interest in the cultural phase of Judaism.

**JEWISH YOUTH EDUCATION TO BE  
GIVEN PRIORITY**

The success in creating the agencies for the moral training of youth will, in the last instance, depend upon our having something to give them that will hold their interest by reason of its cultural value and relevance to life. We need not, however, wait that long. Much may be accomplished even with our present agencies, if the synagogues, Jewish centers, Y. M. H. A.'s and kindred institutions will give to the problem of Torah for the youth priority over all their other activities. The main object in providing Jewish educational facilities in any of these institutions should be to influence the youth spiritually and Jewishly. Young people's classes in religious and ethical subject-matter should be established everywhere. Rabbis and educators should be exempted from many of the social duties and needless speechmaking, so that they might de-

vote the greater part of their time and ability to the task of educating the youth. By these and similar means we might succeed in making the duty of moral re-education during the years of youth a practical norm of Jewish life.

**RE-EDUCATION OF THE ADULT**

With all that the youth may have learned about life and its duties, by the time he attains manhood and has to make his place in the world, he is face to face with situations that do not seem to fit the rules and principles which he has come to accept as authoritative. Every day brings with it some variation, at times slight, at others pronounced, upon what he had been taught to regard as the usual course of life. When that occurs, what is there to guide him in adjusting himself to the niceties of each new situation as it arises? Now that he has to shift for himself, life is no longer a matter of theory and abstract ideals, but of concrete and oft harsh realities

which are apt to render him oblivious to all the delicate weighings of right and wrong. Hence, Judaism's behest that Torah be the occupation of the man no less than of the youth or child.

Joshua, long past the age when he acted as aide-de-camp to Moses, and about to embark on his life's task, was commanded, "The book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night."

These words imply that in waging the battle of life we should consult the teachings of the Torah. The real opportunity to reckon with those teachings arises when we are engaged in the business of living. The Jew, therefore, to whom Torah signifies the call to a life of social responsibility enters upon a second stage in the process of re-education as soon as he takes his place in the world of practical affairs. The mere reinterpretation of traditional views in terms of the modern world outlook is

not enough for the contingencies of the workaday world. What the individual man or woman needs now is to know how to apply the general principles of religion and morality to the specific situations as they arise from day to day.

We must always be at school. It is a mistake to believe that once a person has received a considerable amount of formal instruction as to what is right, or has been brought up in an ethical environment, he can be relied upon to do the right thing without further thought or study. Virtue which represents nothing more than the momentum of early training is liable to exhaust itself in pious wishes which never bear any fruit in action. There are always enough new problems that come up from time to time in the home, in the shop, in the office and in the market-place that render all precedents inadequate and that demand deeper insight and greater initiative than can come from mere habit.

*The Meaning of Torah*

This second stage in the moral re-education may take the form of detailed study and discussion of the specific ethical or spiritual problems which we encounter in our daily work and dealings with others. We should learn to take counsel together, in order to know how to translate the desire to do what is right into the actual terms of the new situation that we confront. No ethical principle is of much value at this stage of mental development, unless it come down to earth. It should deal with the relations of employer to employé, of producer to consumer, and of buyer to seller. It should go far enough to help in the fixing of just prices and in the determination of a fair scale of wages. It should throw light upon such a problem as that of engaging and dismissing labor. It should aid in deciding what is legitimate and what illegitimate in our methods of attracting trade. There is adequate ethical material in our domestic life for "Sheeloth and Tshuboth," the

kind of "responsa" Judaism will have to produce in the future. The professional callings, no less than business, are in need of having the ideal of service translated into concrete "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." Wherever such codes have been formulated, it should be the function of Judaism not only to make a gesture of assent, but to urge the conscientious conformity to those self-imposed standards.

At first sight, it seems that our personal conduct scarcely affords enough material for continuous study. The greater part of it is so routinized that there appears to be no place in it for moral reflection. This is the very reason most of us after twenty vegetate spiritually. If we were accustomed to subject our conduct more frequently to intelligent scrutiny and judgment, we would discover that it possesses aspects which might enlarge our mental and spiritual horizon.

TORAH AS ENLIGHTENED OPINION

Moral education is not meant to be confined to social and spiritual problems which fall within the narrow range of personal experience. Our actions are determined by the opinions we hold concerning matters to which we are related merely as spectators. Nothing human should be foreign to the one that studies life from the standpoint of Torah. Study which embraces every human interest enables us to exert a healthy influence upon public opinion. The understanding of the economic, political and social issues of the day from an ethical point of view is conducive to enlightened thought and action in human society. The invisible force of public opinion is a deciding factor in the fate of nations and empires. Whether human society is to be plastic to the ideals of its seers and prophets depends upon enlightened opinion, the only remedy that will save humanity from all forms of mob hys-

teria. But enlightened opinion is possible only when we are armed with adequate information, and when we are trained in properly sifting and appraising the facts at our disposal. Both of these requirements make it incumbent upon us always to be students of human nature and of worldly affairs.

The re-education of the adult does not necessarily have to be carried on by means of formal study. Unless it assume the form of recreation, it is not likely to be carried on at all. We should acquire the habit of reading not merely for the sake of killing time, but to become better informed as to what is going on in the world of thought and of action. Members of large families that come together frequently should once in a while replace their small talk with reading from some of the world's great literary treasures. They might stumble in that way upon the literary treasures of the Jewish people. The custom of arranging costly card

parties, which is in vogue in many of our homes, might be interrupted at times by gatherings at which, under proper leadership, a matter of vital import to the life of the nation would be the topic of discussion and reading. Is it too visionary to expect that Jewish men and women of average mentality should for a moment consider breaking with their deadening routine of futile activities and pleasures? Nothing that ought to be is impossible. With this as a basic assumption, Judaism has been able to achieve wonders.

Informed discussion, even of matters that have but an indirect bearing on personal conduct, has a profound moral value. We can accustom ourselves to find as much interest in discussing the League of Nations, the race problem in America, or the outlawing of war, as in dilating upon swinging a golf stick, the intricacies of bridge or mah-jong. Discussion of political and social problems has long ago been recognized as a

potent factor in civilization. In olden times Socrates, and in modern times Bagehot, advocated discussion as a means of clarifying our ideas and socializing our activities. A people that lacks the capacity to discuss intelligently its every-day interests and problems is incapable of self-government. Emotional condemnation alone will never cast out the war spirit that has taken possession of mankind. If that evil spirit is ever to be exorcised, it will come about through the conscientious study and frank discussion of the great and terrible questions that agitate the modern world.

The success of ethical study and discussion will depend upon our being able to identify them as Torah, and to approach them with that same spiritual attitude as our fathers did the study of Scriptural and Rabbinic texts. If the instruments of study, the personality of the teachers, and the atmosphere where such discussion is carried on are calculated to inspire the heart as well as in-

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form the mind, we may look forward to the reawakening of literary activity among Jews that will exert as potent a spiritual influence in the future as the Talmud did in the past.

*"Then they that feared the Lord  
Spoke one with another;  
And the Lord hearkened, and heard,  
And a book of remembrance was written  
before Him,  
For them that feared the Lord, and that  
thought upon His name."*

Mal. iii. 16.