



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
**AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES**

**MS-763: Rabbi Herbert A. Friedman Collection, 1930-2004.**

Series I: Wexner Heritage Foundation, 1947-2004.

Subseries 2: Writings and Addresses, 1947-2003.

---

Box  
69

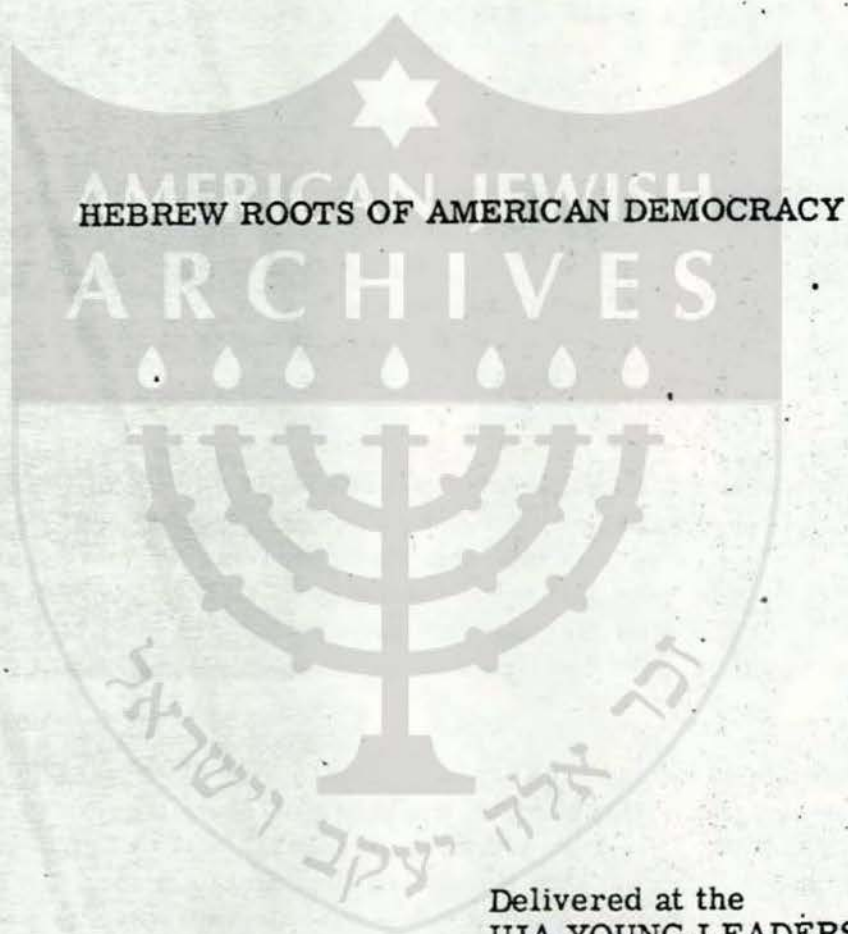
Folder  
11

"Hebrew Roots of American Democracy." 1967, 1980.

For more information on this collection, please see the finding aid on the  
American Jewish Archives website.

---

ADDRESS BY  
HERBERT A. FRIEDMAN



Delivered at the  
UJA YOUNG LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
22-25 February 1967



## HEBREW ROOTS OF AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

What our fathers accepted as a way of life and as a matter of course - the practice and maintenance of their Judaism and their Jewish communal existence - the sons no longer accept automatically, but must decide to do, as a conscious act of choice.

Over and over you have heard me say that the most important question we must answer for your generation and the ones ahead is the relevance of Judaism for the modern world. Why should you live as Jews, work for Jewish survival, maintain your identity as Jews? Why is it not sufficient for you simply to be decent moral upstanding American citizens?

And over and over I give the answer that Judaism is relevant to the world today, because it contains the solutions to the world's problems. The belief it holds about the dignity and quality of man, his purpose on earth, the form of society in which he should organize himself, the type of economy and policy he should establish, the moral attitudes he should possess, are all of such a nature that if these beliefs were to become actualized in human conduct then mankind would find itself living in a utopia - or, as the ancient Hebrews term had it, in a messianic age - where there would be justice, mercy, peace and plenty.

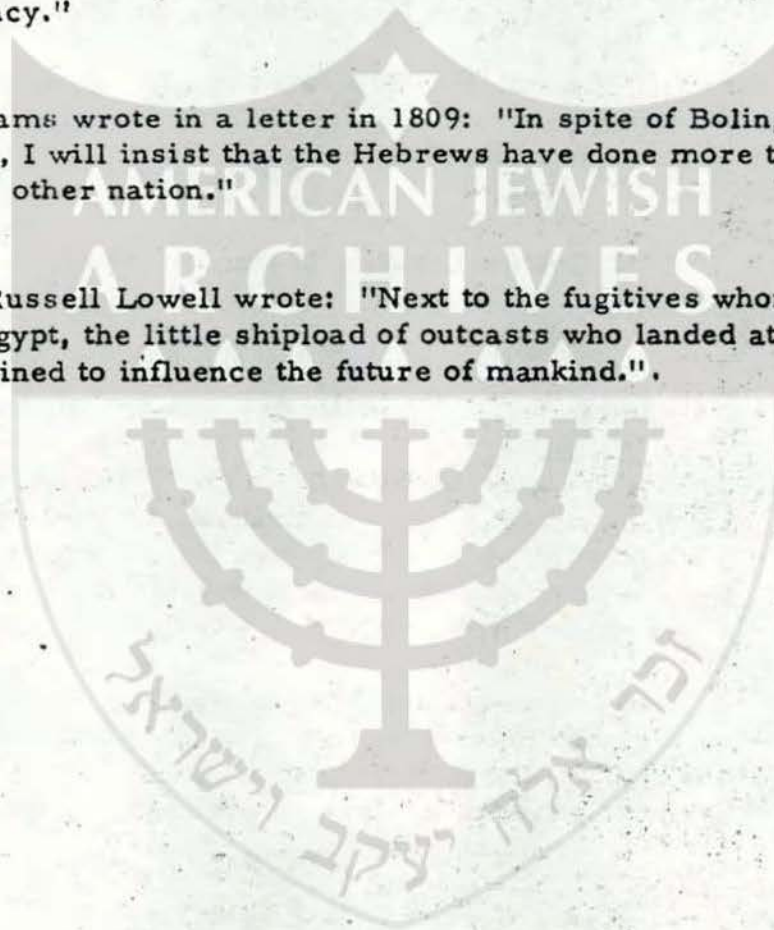
Professor Milton Konvitz put it brilliantly in an essay entitled "Judaism and the Democratic Ideal" when he said: "The Jews are the chosen people only because God has chosen them from among all the peoples to give them the Torah. The supreme treasure is not the Jewish people but the Torah. It is the message and not the messenger that is superior; so that one might speak really of the "chosen message" rather than of the "chosen people."

The religious-ethical message of Judaism is based upon the equality of man - and the quintessential meaning of Jewish existence is this universalistic approach. "All men are created equal," wrote Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence. The Rabbis in the Mishna wrote the same thing when they said, "A single man (Adam) was created for the sake of peace among mankind, that none should say to his fellow, 'My father was greater than your father'." The Bible begins with the story of man, Adam, not Abraham, Jew, and the Rabbis commented that Adam was made from dust gathered from the four corners of the earth, so that no people should later be able to say that he was made from the dust only in their own corner of the world.



## SOME CHOICE QUOTATIONS

- A. Grover Cleveland: "The history of the ancient Jewish commonwealth is astonishingly like our own republic in its democratic and underlying institutions."
- B. President Coolidge, in an address dedicating the Jewish community Center in Washington, D. C., used this sentence: "The Hebraic mortar," said Lecky, "cemented the foundations of American democracy."
- C. John Adams wrote in a letter in 1809: "In spite of Bolingbroke and Voltaire, I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation."
- D. James Russell Lowell wrote: "Next to the fugitives whom Moses led out of Egypt, the little shipload of outcasts who landed at Plymouth... are destined to influence the future of mankind."





## INFLUENCE OF HEBREW CIVILIZATION AND CULTURE

### A. On Background of Puritans

1. Cromwell's army found heroes in O.T.
2. Cromwell's officers proposed a reorganization of English council of state, making it body of 70 to conform with ancient Sanhedrin.
3. Gen. Thomas Harrison introduced into short (Barebones) Parliament a proposal to establish Mosaic law as the civil code of England.
4. Cromwell himself favored a form of state church in which Old and New Testaments would be reconciled and an intimate connection found between the "Jewish people of God" and the English puritan theocracy.

### B. On Early Puritan Colonies in New England

#### 1. Importance of Hebrew

- a. Harvard - Hebrew mandatory - one day per week - 3 years
- b. Yale - President Ezra Stiles said "From my first accession to the presidency, I have required all the freshmen to study Hebrew." In 1781 he delivered the commencement address in Hebrew. He was an ardent Hebraist - "a glorious language which throws more light on the O.T. than all the commentaries."
- c. Samuel Johnson, first president of King's College, now Columbia, referred to Hebrew as "being essential to a gentleman's education." He made it mandatory for tutors, wrote a Hebrew grammar, taught it to his grandchildren, spoke it with Jonathan Edwards, famous minister.
- d. Philadelphia Academy, now University of Pennsylvania, had a full professorship of Hebrew by 1782.
3. Dartmouth, organized before the Revolution, as an institution to train missionaries to evangelize the Indians, had Hebrew as mandatory in its curriculum.
- f. Not only colleges - but high school. John Davenport was directly instrumental in introducing study of Hebrew in first public school of New Haven. The instructor was appointed 28 June 1660.



- g. Use of Hebrew in personal names. When Connecticut delegation ratified the Constitution, for instance, 80 names came straight out of O.T. From Aaron to Zebulon, the roll call ranged, solemn and resounding: Abraham and Abijah; Amos and Asaph; Eli, Eliphalet, Eleazer, Apaphras; Gideon, Isaac, Jabez; Jeremiah and Joshua and Jedidiah; Nehemiah, Moses, Lemuel, Ichabod, Daniel; Seth and Solomon and Selah.
- h. William Bradford, Cotton Mather, many others could deliver lengthy discourses in Hebrew.
- i. H.L. Mencken in his book "The American Language" tells the following anecdote:

"There was a sufficiently widespread interest in and knowledge of Hebrew in the colonies at the time of the Revolution to allow for the circulation of a story that 'certain members of Congress proposed that the use of English be formally prohibited in the United States, and Hebrew be substituted for it.' Whether or not there is any basis of fact in this story has never actually been determined but that is relatively of little moment. The important thing is that the people of the time thought it logical enough to circulate."

## 2. Effects on Pilgrim Codes

- a. As early as 1636, Plymouth Colony renounced the authority of English laws and adopted the Pilgrim Code, which stated in its foreword that "It was the great privilege of Israel of old and so was acknowledged by them, Nehemiah 9 and 10, that God gave them right judgments and true Lawes. They are for the mayne so exemplary, being grounded in principles of moral equity as that all Christians especially ought alwaies to have an eye thereunto in the framing of their politique constitutions. We can safely say both for ourselves and for them that we have had an eye principally unto the aforesaid platforme in the framing of this small body of lawes."
- b. In colony of New Haven it was ordered (1639) that "the judicial laws of God as they were delivered by Moses shall be accounted of moral equity and generally bind all offenders." So rigid, in fact, was New Haven's platform of adherence to the Mosaic law that it refused to allow trial by jury because no such thing could be found in the Pentateuch!
- c. In 1637-8, Portsmouth and Newport were settled practically as one colony. The settlers were, like Williams and his companions,



exiles or emigrants from Massachusetts. "In imitation of the form of government which existed for a time among the Jews, the inhabitants chose Mr. Coddington to be their magistrate with the title of Judge; and a few months later they elected three elders to assist him" (taken from a memoir of Roger Williams by Prof. Knowles).

### 3. Judaism in Defense of Liberty (in preparation for Revolution)

- a. James T. Adams said: "In spirit these Puritans may almost be considered Jews and not Christians. Their God was the God of the O.T., their laws were the laws of the O.T., and their guides to conduct were the O.T."
- b. James I was Pharoah  
England was Egypt  
Atlantic Ocean was Red Sea  
America was Canaan
- c. Lecky puts the point as follows: "It is at least an historical fact that in the great majority of instances the early Protestant defenders of civil liberty derived their political principles chiefly from the O.T. and the defenders of despotism from the New. The rebellions that were so frequent in Jewish history formed the favorite topic of the one - the unreserved submission inculcated by St. Paul of the other."
- d. De Laveleye, of University of Liege, writing in same vein, observed: "The Reformation...was a return to primitive Christianity, and above all toward the democracy of the prophets of the O.T., which was alive with the breath of liberty and resistance to absolutism. It tended toward the birth of republican and constitutional institutions."
- e. It was necessary to convince the people that the whole theory of Divine Right of Kings, of unlimited submission to the King, was morally wrong and without sanction in the eyes of God. Champions of Revolution quoted Samuel's opposition to Kingship (1 S 8); how Gideon declined the offer of Kingship (Judges 8:22,23); and Jethro's council to Moses (Ex. 18) "Election sermons" were preached for years - upholding idea of a Republican form of government modelled upon the Hebrew commonwealth.

Dr. Samuel Langdon, president of Harvard, in an election sermon



1775 delivered before the Congress of Mass. Bay said: "The Jewish government, according to the original constitution which was divinely established, if considered merely in a civil view, was a perfect republic." By special vote his sermon was ordered printed and sent to each minister in the colony and to each member of the Congress. In 1788 he delivered again a sermon entitled "The Republic of the Israelites an Example to the American States." This was given after the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, urging adoption of the new Constitution.

- f. In "Common Sense" Tom Paine himself based his final argument against Monarchy on the O.T. stories of Samuel and Gideon. He quoted the stories verbatim and then concluded: "These portions of Scripture are direct and positive. They admit of no equivocal construction. That the Almighty hath here entered His protest against monarchical government is true, or the Scripture is false."
- g. The phrase from Lev. 15:10 "Proclaim liberty throughout the land unto all the inhabitants thereof;" was inscribed on the Liberty Bell in 1753, a quarter-century before the Declaration of Independence.
- h. On the afternoon of the day when the Declaration of Independence was adopted, a committee consisting of Franklin, Jefferson and John Adams was appointed "to prepare a proper device for a Seal for the United States of America." Their design was not adopted, but it does show the influence of the O.T. The proposed design represented Pharoah, sword in hand, seated in a chariot, pursuing the Israelites through the divided water of the Red Sea. On the farther shore, safely landed, stood Israel and Moses, under the rays of a pillar of fire. Moses, extending his hand over the sea, is causing its waters to overwhelm Pharoah and all his host. Surrounding the seal at its edge were the words: Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God.
- i. In 1783, Dr. Ezra Stiles, president of Yale, speaking at Hartford before the General Assembly of State of Conn., said: "Whereupon Congress put at the head of the spirited army the only man on whom the eyes of all Israel were placed. Posterity, incredulous as they may be, will yet acknowledge that this American Joshua was raised up by God for the great work of leading the armies of this American Joseph (now separated from his brethren) and conducting these people to liberty and independence."
- j. Such a preponderance of intellectual opinion existed, because of the real feeling that the Hebrew Commonwealth was the First Federal Republic. Twelve tribes with own government and local



jurisdiction. Central government divided into 3 departments:

- a. Chief Executive or Judge
- b. Senate or Sanhedrin of 70 - both legislative and judicial, like English House of Lords
- c. Assembly - popular branch, called "The Congregation"





## DEMOCRATIC CONCEPTS IN HEBREW TRADITION

### A. ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL DEMOCRACY

#### 1. Limited Power of Chief Executive

##### a) Samuel's warning against having a King at all

And said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways; now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD.

And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee.

Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them.

And Samuel told all the words of the LORD unto the people that asked of him a king.

And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots.

And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots.

And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers.

And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.

And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants.



And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work.

He will take the tenth of your sheep; and ye shall be his servants.

And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the LORD will not hear you in that day.

Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us;

That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and light our battles.

And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the LORD.

And the LORD said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king. And Samuel said unto the men of Israel. Go ye every man unto his city.

1 S 8:5-22

b) King is constitutional Monarch - subject to law himself

When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like all the nations that are round about me;

thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother.

Only he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.

Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply himself silver and gold.

And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites:



And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes, to do them:

That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.

Dt 17:14-20

Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son.

That he may judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with justice.

May he judge the poor of the people, and save the children of the needy, and crush the oppressor.

For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper.

He will have pity on the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.

He shall redeem their soul from oppression and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight.

Ps 72: 1, 2, 4, 12-14

c) Nathan's condemnation of David

And the LORD sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor.

The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds;

But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children: it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the way-faring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him.



And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die:

And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity.

And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man. Thus saith the LORD GOD OF Israel, and I delivered thee out of hand of Saul;

And I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah; and if that had been too little, I would moreover have given unto thee such and such things.

Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the LORD, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife.

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun.

For thou didst it secretly: but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.

And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.

Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born until thee shall surely die.

And Nathan departed unto his house. And the LORD struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick.

David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.

And the elders of his house arose, and went to him, to raise him up from the earth: but he would not, neither did he eat bread with them.



And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died. And the servants of David feared to tell him that the child was dead: for they said, Behold, while the child was yet alive, we spake unto him, and he would not harken unto our voice: how will he then vex himself, if we tell him that the child is dead?

But when David saw that his servants whispered, David perceived that the child was dead: therefore David said unto his servants, Is the child dead? and they said, He is dead.

Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the LORD, and worshipped: then he came to his own house; and when he required, they set bread before him, and he did eat.

Then said his servants unto him, What thing is this that thou hast done? thou didst fast and weep for the child, while it was alive; but when the child was dead thou didst rise and eat bread.

And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell whether GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?

But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again: I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.

And David comforted Bathsheba his wife, and went in unto her, and lay with her: and she bare a son, and he called his name Solomon: and the LORD loved him.

And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, because of the LORD.

And Joab fought against Rabbath and the children of Ammon, and took the royal city.

And Joab sent messengers to David, and said; I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters.

Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city and it be called after my name.

And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it.

And he took their king's crown from off his head, the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the previous stones: and it was



set on David's head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance.

And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

2 S 12

d) Elijah's condemnation of Ahab

And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.

And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money.

And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee.

And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread.

But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread?

And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money: or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard.

And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth.



And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people:

And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die.

And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebeel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them.

They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people.

And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died.

Then sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead.

And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead.

And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it.

And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, in the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine.

And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD.

Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel.



And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nabat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin.

And of Jezebel also spake the LORD saying, the dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.

Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat.

But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.

And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying,

Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

1 K 21

## 2. Consent of Governed

- a) Moses' Selection of Judges to assist in governing - looks as though he selected

And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening.

And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even?

And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to enquire of God:



When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws.

And Moses' father in law said unto him, The Thing that thou doest is not good.

Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee: thou are not able to perform it thyself alone.

Hearken now unto my voice, I will give thee counsel, and God shall be with thee: Be thou for the people to God-ward, that thou mayest bring the causes unto God:

And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do.

Moreover, thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens:

And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee.

If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace.

So Moses hearkened to the voice of his father in law, and did all that he had said.

And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.

And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.

And Moses let his father in law depart; and he went his way into his own land.



You (the people) shall appoint judges and officers, thou shalt make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, tribe by tribe: and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.

Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

Justice, justice shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Dt. 16:18-20

but, the people selected

And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone:

The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.

(The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!)

How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?

Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.

And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do.

So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes.

And I charges your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him.

Ye shall respect persons in judgment; but ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.

And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do.

Dt 16:18-20



You (the people) shall appoint judges and officers, thou shalt make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, tribe by tribe: and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment.

Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

Justice, justice shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Dt. 16:18-20

but, the people selected

And I spake unto you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone:

The LORD your God hath multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude.

(The LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!)

How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?

Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.

And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do.

So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known, and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes.

And I charges your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him.

Ye shall respect persons in judgment; but ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it.

And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do.

Dt 16:18-20



John Adams: "Every act of government, every exercise of sovereignty against or without the consent of the people is injustice, usurpation and tyranny."

### 3. Equality Before the Law

- a) This concept is clearly shown in instructions given to judges to insure impartial justice.

Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honor the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbor.

Lev. 19:15

Thou shalt not raise a false report; put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness.

Neither shalt thou countenance a poor man in his cause.

Thou shalt not wrest the judgment of the poor in his cause.

And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.

Ex. 23:1, 3, 6, 8

Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

That which is altogether just shall thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Dt. 16:18-20

- b) Even more remarkable is sense of scrupulous fairness towards the alien, the stranger.

Ye shall have one manner of law, as well for the stranger, as for one of your own country, for I am the LORD your God.

Lev. 24:22





#### 4. Individual Responsibility for One's Acts

- a) Repudiation of collective guilt and collective punishment was tremendous advance

The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

Dt. 24:16

The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

Ezek. 18:20

#### 5. Privacy of Home

- a) Basic principle of English Common Law - "a man's home is his castle" is here foreshadowed

When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge.

Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee.

Dt. 24:10-11

#### 6. Rights of Citizen in War

And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.

And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it.

And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house lest he die in battle, and another man take her.

Dt. 20: 5-7



## B. ELEMENTS OF ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY

### 1. Sabbatical and Jubilee Laws as Correctives and Equalizers

- a) Wealth redistributed periodically, thus preventing great contrasts between rich and poor

If thy brother be waxen poor, and hath sold away some of his possession, and if any of his kin come to redeem it, then shall he redeem that which his brother sold.

But if he be not able to restore it to him, then that which is sold shall remain in the hand of him that bought it until the year of jubilee: and in the jubilee it shall go out, and he shall return unto his possession.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES Lev. 25:25,28

- b) Poor protected against chronic debt and loss of their inheritance

In the year of this jubilee ye shall return every man unto his possession.

Lev. 25:13

At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release.

And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbor shall release it; He shall not exact it of his neighbor, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD's release.

Dt. 15:1,2

- c) Prevented multiplication of great landholdings

The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me.

Lev. 25:23

- d) Curved slavery

And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.

Lev. 25:10



And if thy brother, A Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years, then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.

And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty;

Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.

And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing today.

Dt. 15:12-15

## 2. Further Protective Economic Regulations

### a) Against charging interest

If thou lend money to any of my people that is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as a usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.

Ex. 22:25

### b) Against taking clothes as pawn

If thou at all take thy neighbor's garment to pledge, thou shalt restore it unto him by that the sun goeth down.

For that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious.

Ex. 22:26,27

And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge:

In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God.

Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge.

Dt. 24: 12,13,17



c) Against taking means of livelihood as pawn

No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge.

Dt. 24:6

d) Giving day of rest

But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

Ex. 20:10

e) Paying wages daily

Thou shalt not oppress a hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates:

In the same day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee.

Dt. 24: 14-15

Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbor, neither rob him: the wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all night until the morning.

Lev. 19:13

## C. ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

### 1. Social Responsibility

a) As "brother's keeper"

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the LORD.

Lev. 19:17-18



- b) Toward widow and orphan, poor and helpless, including stranger

And if thy brother be waxen poor, and cannot maintain himself with you; then thou shalt maintain him: thou he be a stranger, or a sojourner; that he may live with thee.

Lev. 25:35

And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest.

And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD thy God.

AMERICAN JEWISH Lev. 19:9-10

If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy GOD giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thine brother:


But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely land him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.

Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

Thou shalt surely give him, and thy heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteth thine hand unto.

For the poor shall never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land.

Dt. 15:7-11



When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.



When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

Dt. 24:19-21

Thou shalt neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child.

If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry.

Ex. 22:21-23

c) Toward helpless and disabled

Thou shalt not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling-block before the blind, but shalt fear thy God: I am the LORD.

d) Toward the alien (this injunction to treat the stranger as brother is mentioned in Torah 36 times)

But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Lev. 19:34

He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the LORD only, he shall be utterly destroyed.

Ex. 22:20

Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Ex. 23:9

And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him.

Dt. 1:16



He doth executive the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

Dt. 10:18

Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless and widow: and all the people shall say, Amen.

Dt. 27:19

e) Toward Slavery

And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee, thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond-servant:

But as a hired servant, and as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee:

And then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him, and shall return unto his own family, and unto the possession of his fathers shall he return.

Thou shalt not rule over him with rigor; but shalt fear thy God.

Lev. 25:39-41,43

f) Protecting runaway slave

He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him.

There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel.

Dt. 23:16-17

g) Compensation for injuring a slave

And if a man smite the eye of his servant, or the eye of his maid, that it perish: he shall let him go free for his eye's sake.

Ex. 21:26



b) Towards animals, trees, all living things

Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.

Dt. 22:4

If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him.

Ex. 23:5

When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege:

Dt. 20:19

## VI. GREAT PROPHETIC IDEALS

### A. Social Justice as means of serving God

This revolutionary concept marked a tremendous ethical advance in the history of mankind.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of the goats.

When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to trample my courts?

Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure iniquity along with the solemn assembly.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me: I am weary to bear them.

And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.



Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings  
from before mine eyes, cease to do evil;

Learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the  
fatherless, plead for the widow.

Is. 1:11-17

Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before  
God on high? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with  
calves of a year old?

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten  
thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my  
transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

It hath been told thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the  
LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and  
to walk humbly with thy God.

Micah 6:6-8

I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your  
solemn assemblies.

Yea, though ye offer me burnt-offerings and your meal-offerings,  
I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings  
of your fat beasts.

Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear  
the melody of thy viols.

But let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a mighty  
stream.

Amos 5:21-24

Is such the fast that I have chosen? the day for a man to afflict  
his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread  
sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an  
acceptable day to the LORD?

Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of  
wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed  
go free, and that ye break every yoke?



Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house: when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?

Is. 58:5-7

## B. Universal Peace

And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Is. 2:4

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.

And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.

Is. 11:6-9

And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of hosts hath spoken it.

Micah 4:3-4



### C. Equality of

And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided unto all nations under the whole heaven.

Dt. 4:19

The LORD hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Is. 52:10

Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer (their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar) for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.

Is. 56:7

Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed by Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.

Is. 19:25

Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, the LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunich say, Behold, I am a dry tree.

Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;

Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.

Is. 56: 3,6,7



Are ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?

Amos 9:7

Therefore will I howl for Moah, and I will cry out for all Moab; mine heart shall mourn for the men of Kirheres.

Jer. 48:31

So shall ye divide this land unto you according to the tribes of Israel.

And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you, and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel.

And it shall come to pass, that in what tribe the stranger sojourneth, there shall ye give him his inheritance, saith the Lord GOD.

Ezek. 47:21-23

Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night;

And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right and their left hand; and also much cattle?

Jonah 4:10-11





איחוד  
ליהדות  
מתקדמת  
באמריקה

## Discussion Guide

# ADULT JEWISH STUDIES

UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS • 838 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021  
DEPARTMENT OF ADULT JEWISH STUDIES • EDITH SAMUEL, DIRECTOR • (212) 249-0100

Date: WINTER, 1980

Title:

Aims:

Who  
Participates?

Where?  
Number  
of Sessions?

Speakers?

Resource  
Materials?

### THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF JUDAISM

1. To investigate some central Jewish ideas and concepts;
2. To learn how these ideas diverged from ideas, beliefs and practices taught by other faiths and ancient societies;
3. To appreciate how Jews have clung to their basic Jewish ideas;
4. To comprehend the responsibilities involved in being a member of a distinctive people holding distinctive concepts.

Adults who have already acquired a background in Jewish history and in basic Judaism. This Guide can be used either for individual or for group study.

In the Temple, at home, in camps, kallot or chavurot.

A minimum of 12, each running at least three hours.

None needed. Laypersons can carry this project forward by using this Guide, the required text and reference books. If the Rabbi's schedule permits, the group may wish to invite him/her to discuss a particular theme or to answer accumulated questions.

**Required:** Abba Hillel Silver, *Where Judaism Differed: An Inquiry into the Distinctiveness of Judaism*. The Macmillan Company, 866 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022. \$5.95. (Check your bookdealer or the publisher to make sure that copies are available. As of January, 1980, the book was in print.)

**Reference:** The Jewish Encyclopaedia or The Encyclopaedia Judaica;  
A standard encyclopedia like the Encyclopaedia Britannica;  
An unabridged dictionary;  
A standard Jewish history such as Solomon Grayzel's *A History of the Jews*. Jewish Publication Society; Bernard Bamberger, *The Story of Judaism*. Schocken Books.



### Before You Begin . . .

This is a course intended for persons who already have a knowledge of Jewish history and of basic Judaism. While some beginning students may wish to undertake it, we believe that this course will be most rewarding to those who come to it with a foundation of Jewish knowledge.

*Where Judaism Differed* by the late Reform rabbi, scholar and Zionist leader, Abba Hillel Silver (1893-1963) originally appeared in 1956, and since that time, it has proved to be an invaluable text for those who seek a clear explanation of decisive and distinctive Jewish ideas. As of this writing (January, 1980), the Macmillan Company still has a supply of copies of the book. Every Jewish library should have one.

When the book first appeared, the Journal of the Central Conference of American Rabbis hailed it as "superb." Over the years, *Where Judaism Differed* has lost nothing of its pertinence or readability. Indeed, at a time when missionary groups such as "Jews for Jesus" attempt to blur the distinctions between Judaism and Christianity, and when some of the cults preach a fuzzy and distorted universalism, it is refreshing to pick up *Where Judaism Differed* and to pinpoint the evolution and intent of specific Jewish teachings.

Because Dr. Silver has swept through Jewish—and world—history in less than 300 pages, certain names, places, events or terms are only fleetingly identified. Your study group may wish to appoint several researchers who will undertake to look up terms and report to the group. The reference works listed on page 1 will be helpful. An unabridged dictionary will be helpful with words like: antinomian, chthonic, cosmogony, eschatology, Gnostic, mantic, Parousia, patristic, piacular, soteriology, syncretism and theophany.

This is not a course in Comparative Religion, in that Dr. Silver does not systematically analyze the tenets and practices of other religions. Rather, he looks into some of the major beliefs, concepts, mood and modes of Judaism and holds them up against the background of doctrines and practices of other religious systems, ancient and modern. You will find, upon the completion of this course, that you understand how, why, and in what respects Judaism is different from other faiths.

### A Word about Procedures

Before you undertake this course, check with your local bookdealer or the publisher that copies of the required text are still in print. Books for which we prepare Discussion Guides are in print at the time we issue our Guides, but we have no idea when or if publishers will declare a text out of print.

Participants in the course are required to read the text in advance and to bring their texts to the discussion sessions, which should be scheduled ideally on a once-a-week or twice-a-month basis. A chairperson should be selected to pose the discussion questions and to keep the discussions orderly. Questions arising from the text which cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the group should be saved up and submitted to the Rabbi or Temple Educator with an invitation to him/her to attend a specific session in order to provide clarification. Good luck!



**Session One: AN INTRODUCTION**

**Required reading:** Silver: Introduction and Chapter 1.

**Discussion questions:**

1. In his Introduction, Dr. Silver announces some of the themes that he will develop later in the book. What, in his view, is the highest expression of the genius of the Jewish people?
2. What, in Judaism, is the "true worship" of God? How do Jews show reverence for God?
3. "Judaism is Torah." What is Torah? What are the meanings of "Halachah"? What is the goal of "Judaism's way"?
4. "Judaism is no more the product of any one country than it is the product of any one age"—or, we could add, the product of any one person. (Chapter 1.) What does this reveal about the nature of Judaism?
5. Judaism's "reverence for the past and for the written Torah ensured for it an essential unity and a historic continuity." Despite the differences among the various Jewish denominations today, what basic ideas unify all of them?
6. "The religious monotheism of the Rabbis of the Talmud and their code of ethics centering in the three constants—unity, freedom, and compassion—differed in no essential regard from those of the prophets who lived nearly a thousand years before them, and they differ in no fundamental respect from those of their successors to the present day." (Chapter 1.) In other words, the message of Judaism has remained fundamentally unchanged over the ages. What does this fact reveal about the strength and timelessness of the original message?
7. At the end of Chapter 1, Dr. Silver summarizes the contributions made by Jewish thinkers and scholars in various ages of Jewish history. Did any of these contributions change the essential ideas of Judaism? What were the contributions of the prophets? The sages in the period of Rabbinic Judaism? The medieval Jewish philosophers? The Jewish mystics? The Chasidic movement? Modern Judaism?

**Session Two: A PATTERN IN HISTORY**

**Required reading:** Silver: Chapters 2 and 3

**Discussion questions:**

1. Judaism understands God to be the God of history, "progressively revealing Himself in the process of history." How, in the Jewish view, did He reveal Himself to the people?
2. What, in the Jewish view, is the Divine plan for human history? What is the role of the human being in that plan? The role of Israel?
3. In what ways are the major Jewish festivals and the Shabbat Day "festivals of remembrance"? What does the Shabbat commemorate? The holidays of Passover, Shavuot, Sukot? Chanukah? Tisha be'Av?
4. Judaism and the Jewish people are "inseparably intertwined." The Hebrew Bible is simultaneously a history of a particular people and the record of their encounters with the One God. Could Judaism have arisen without a Jewish people?



- ✓ 5. What was the attitude of the Rabbis toward converts? Toward forcible conversion? Was anyone excluded from conversion because of race or station in life? Were converts regarded as second-class Jews?
6. How did Christianity and Islam use the Hebrew Bible to "authenticate their own scriptures"? How did the Church Fathers see Judaism vis-a-vis Christianity? How did Augustine interpret the role of Israel?
7. How did the prophetic message of Judaism influence both Catholic and Protestant Christianity?
8. "Judaism saw no inconsistency between religious universalism and nationalism." Explain.
9. Jews were receptive, Dr. Silver tells us (Chapter 3), to ideas from other cultures—but not always, and not everywhere. Generally speaking, when and why did Jews fall back into isolation? Were they justified?
10. What aspects of Hellenistic culture repelled the Jews? Were their fears about the corruption of Jewish youth real or imagined? What did the Rabbis fear about Roman civilization?
11. "There is no unbridgeable gulf between the culture of the Greeks and the culture of the Jews," writes Dr. Silver, but he then goes on to contrast the temperament and outlook of the Greek philosophers with the mind and outlook of the Jews. Explain the differences between them.
12. How did the Muslim civilization affect Jewish civilization?
13. What were the reasons for the ban on (a) the works of Moses Maimonides; (b) the study of Cabala by the young; and (c) on Chassidism? Do they seem to you to have been justified? A threat to normative Judaism?
14. Who was Elisha ben Abuyah, and why was he ostracized? [For those of you who are interested, the late Rabbi Milton Steinberg wrote a novel based on him, called *As A Driven Leaf* (Behrman House). It is well worth reading.]
15. In this chapter, Dr. Silver has mentioned briefly the reformation of Judaism under King Josiah; the purge and the reformation under Ezra and Nehemiah; the Samaritan schism; and the Karaite schism. Explain each of these terms (you will find discussion in Bamberger) and their effect upon Judaism.
16. What were the goals of the 19th century reformers of Judaism?

### Session Three: ON BEING DIFFERENT

Required reading: Silver, Chapter 4

#### Discussion questions:

- \* 1. What was revolutionary about the Jewish concept of a sole Creator God?
2. "There is no theogony (origin or genealogy of the gods) in the Torah and no theomachy (a battle with or among the gods)." But there are remnants of myths. How did Judaism minimize their importance?
3. What is unique about the God of Judaism?



4. What was the solar monism of Ikhnaton? How did it differ from the monotheism of Judaism? Did Egypt accept the worship of Aton?

5. Judaism is defined as "ethical monotheism." How do we derive our ethics and morality? Who is the source and authority?

6. What was the Jewish view toward sexual rites and the sexual practices in the ancient religions and in Greek and Roman life? What was the attitude toward women, in particular, and how did Jewish teachings differ from those of the Greek and Roman teachings about women and family life? How did Jews manifest their "overriding concern to keep the life of the individual Jew and the Jewish family clean and uncorrupted"? (The "I, Claudius" series on public TV was shocking to many even in the permissive 20th century. How do you think the Jews reacted to the goings-on in the Roman palaces of the first century?)

7. Some Jews today, as some Jews throughout the ages, have placed credence in magic, superstition and astrology. Does Judaism condone these practices?

8. Contrast the Hebrew Code with the Code of Hammurabi with regard to: a) differing social classes; b) the treatment of slaves; c) punishment for larceny; d) the treatment of and attitudes toward the stranger, the widow, the orphan, the poor.

9. The *lex talionis*, "an eye for an eye," was abolished in the early days of the Second Commonwealth, yet even today, we hear people calling for it. What was the law, and how did Jews modify it?

10. What was revolutionary about Judaism's attitude toward the poor?

11. How did Judaism regard labor and the laborer? How did the Jewish attitude differ from that of the Greeks and the Romans?

12. How did Judaism protect infants and the aged? Why?

13. "Until the 19th century, cruelty to animals was nowhere illegal, except in Jewish law." What is the Jewish view of treatment of animals?

14. What was Jewish law on capital punishment? On torture? Self-incrimination? Laws of evidence? Execution?

15. What was the role of the prophets in Jewish history?

16. Dr. Silver takes the opportunity (p. 71) to correct the notion that the prophets were not "nationalists." Twice before in his book (pp. 21 and 37), he has raised the question of nationalism, and has stated (p. 37) that "antinationalism is inherently un-Jewish." What is the evidence that the prophets were nationalists? For what possible reasons would "universalists", Jewish and non-Jewish, wish to claim that the prophets of Israel were not interested in the survival of the Jewish state or the Jewish people?

17. What are the implications of the Jewish injunction to love God?

18. "Israel remained a people apart." No one can account for the longevity of the Jewish people. The various ancient peoples Dr. Silver has been discussing—the Babylonians, Assyrians, the Greek empire, the Roman empire, etc.—have all vanished from the earth, but the Jewish people still lives. Do you think that "apartness" was a factor in Jewish survival? Explain?



**Session Four: ON CLINGING TO EMINENCE**

**Required reading:** Silver: Chapters 5 and 6

**Discussion questions:**

1. In these two chapters, Dr. Silver refutes some of the outrageous and biased charges made against the Jews in Professor Arnold J. Toynbee's *A Study of History*. Toynbee's global history was widely touted (especially by Henry Luce's publications) when it first appeared; but it was not long before a number of historians—and especially Jewish historians—rebutted many of the windy and baseless opinions of the professor. Here in Chapter 5, Dr. Silver presents several turgid paragraphs from Toynbee. What are the charges against the Jews?
2. Toynbee appears to be saying that after the age of the Pophets, Judaism was no longer creative, and further, that Jews "perversely sterilized their talent by hiding it in the earth." How do the facts of Jewish history refute that uninformed claim?
3. Toynbee takes umbrage at the fact that the Jews regarded it as a privilege to maintain the covenant. What price did Jews have to pay throughout history for guarding that covenant?
4. At the opening of Chapter 5, Dr. Silver summarizes the points of difference between Judaism and Christianity. The Jews did not reject Jesus per se; what they rejected was "the Messianism of Jesus, Paul's onslaught on the Law, his gospel of redemption through the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus, and the doctrine of God incarnate in man." Why did Christianity fail as a Messianic movement?
5. What is the source of the God concept taught by Jesus?
6. In what respect did the ethics of Jesus differ from Jewish ethics?
7. Did Jesus abandon Jewish Law, in whole or in part? Did he introduce any new laws? Did he question the authority of the Torah?
8. Dr. Silver sees three stages in the transition from Judaism to Christianity. What were those three stages? What was the role of Paul in shaping Christianity? What, in particular, was Paul's attitude toward the Law? Why was it impossible for Jews to accept Paul's conception of the Law?
9. The third stage in the development of Christianity was "the thoroughly Hellenistic Logos gospel of John, wherein the Word which was God became flesh in Jesus, the Son of God, one with the Father. . . ." Why was this idea familiar to pagans of the time? Why did Jews reject it?
10. "It was not the rejection of the Rabbinic Law which made of Christianity a Gentile faith. . . . It was the rejection of *all* authority to the Law and the idea of a God incarnate which placed Christianity outside the bounds of Judaism. Here was the fork of the road!" Why was Christianity appealing to the Gentile world?
11. How did Maimonides regard Jesus and Mohammed?
12. Go back and re-read Toynbee at the beginning of Chapter 5. Was he writing objective history? How does he show his anti-Jewish bias?



## Session Five: ON AVOIDING ALTERNATIVES

Required reading: Silver: Chapter 7

Discussion questions:

X 1. "Social life cannot be constructed on the principle of love alone or on justice alone." Why not? Extend this to family life: is it possible to raise children solely on the basis of rules? Solely on the basis of love? How did the Rabbis understand the attributes of God? What was regarded as the highest of all virtues?

2. How does Judaism understand the nature, the rights and duties and responsibilities of the individual?

3. How does Judaism understand the nature and responsibilities of the community?

4. How does Judaism understand sin?

X 5. "There is no cult of the Ego in Judaism." How do you account for the fact that the name of Moses, the leader of the Exodus, does not appear in the Passover Haggadah, the story of the Exodus?

6. "Judaism frankly confronted the paradoxes which exist in theologic and philosophic thought . . . but (its Sages) did not for a moment slow down the pursuit of their moral objectives." What are some instances?

7. What was punishable in Judaism: the wrong kind of opinions or the wrong kind of conduct? Why?

8. "Judaism held high the ideal of peace . . . yet it never passed over into pacifism." The concept of pacifism was mentioned in Chapter 6 and is now mentioned briefly in Chapter 7. The subject is dealt with at length in Chapter 14. Postpone discussion until then.

9. What is the Jewish concept of a national Messiah? Is the concept a fundamental principle in Judaism?

10. Did Judaism ever preach communism? The abolition of private property? The "sinfulness" of owning property? How did Christian teachings on these subjects differ from Jewish teachings? (Note: The Essenes, the Jewish cult members who lived communally about the first century, B.C.E. in the area of the Dead Sea, may have preached asceticism, celibacy, poverty and communal living, but the sect was a relatively small one and did not influence mainstream Judaism. They will be discussed by Dr. Silver in Chapter 14.)

11. How did the Rabbis maintain a proper balance between text (the Written Law, the Torah) and interpretation?

12. Explain the differing roles of the Temple and the synagogue. What was the effect of the destruction of the Temple in the year 70 C.E.?

13. What is the difference between Halachah and Haggadah (generally spelled Aggadah)? Did Haggadah have any authority in Jewish law?

14. What was the attitude of the Rabbis towards prophecy, oracles, miracles, apocalyptic books? How did Jewish mysticism differ from early Christian mysticism?



### Session Six: ON BEING REASONABLE

Required reading: Silver: Chapters 8 and 9

#### Discussion questions:

1. Dr. Silver portrays Judaism as "a livable faith, not too difficult for man or beyond his reach." What are his grounds for saying this?
- \* 2. "Judaism had [and has!] faith in human perfectibility." What do we mean when we say that Judaism is an optimistic faith?
3. The Hebrew Bible does not command us to love our enemy. Do you think it is possible to love an enemy?
4. Why did some of the Rabbis place a ceiling on giving *tsedakah*?
5. What is *kavanah* in prayer? Why is a meritorious action important, even without *kavanah*?
6. Man is perfectible, but is any human being perfect? How does Judaism view human nature?
- \* 7. What is un-Jewish about the phrase "peace of mind"? Is it a goal of Judaism to achieve peace of mind?
8. Under what circumstances was martyrdom mandatory in Judaism? Why did the Rabbis warn "against an eagerness for self-immolation"?
9. (Chapter 9.) "Among the religions of mankind, Judaism was quite unique in relation to the idea of human progress." What essential elements or beliefs are necessary before the human being is ready to believe in the possibility of human progress?
10. How did the classical writers of Greece and Rome regard human history? Did they believe in the possibility of changing society?
11. Which is greater, in the Jewish view: study or action? Why?
12. Is social progress a tenet of Hinduism or Buddhism? Were the early Christians concerned with this-world social progress?
13. What, according to Dr. Silver, is "the very essence and meaning of Hebraic prophecy"? What are Judaism's "objectives in the quest of the good society"?
14. Why was the book of Ecclesiastes nearly excluded from the Bible canon? How does the final summary statement at the end of Koheleth bring the book back in the orbit of Jewish religious teaching?

### Session Seven: THAT MEN NEED TO BE SAVED

Required reading: Silver: Chapter 10



**Discussion questions:**

1. Why in Judaism is it unnecessary to consider ways in which the human soul may be "liberated," or ways in which a person needs to be "saved"?
2. What is "metempsychosis"? Is it accepted in normative Jewish teaching? Does mainstream Judaism believe in the concept of the dibbuk? Some people today are uncomfortable with the writings of I.B. Singer which portray dibbiks, demons, evil spirits, etc. as part of the real world, and as instrumental in the lives of Jews. What is your reaction?
3. What recurrent themes of dying and resurrected deities occur in the so-called "mystery" religions? What was the purpose of the cultic rites?
4. What was Paul's concept of Original Sin? How was the death of Jesus linked to this concept?
5. "Original Sin is mentioned neither in the Mishnah nor in any Rabbinic code . . . Nowhere is the Jew summoned to atone for an inherited burden of guilt . . . Judaism's primary concern was to teach man not how sin came into the world, but how to avoid sin and how to repent of sin once having succumbed to it." Why, in the Jewish view, are human beings capable of sinning?
6. Does Satan play any major role in Judaism?
7. What is the Jewish concept of teshuvah? Why is it such an important teaching in Judaism? What is involved in sincere repentance?
8. What is the Jewish view of free will? Of the purpose of the commandments in the Torah?
9. Can any person in Judaism absolve another of sins? Atone for another's sins? Are there mediators between Jews and God?
10. "In Judaism a man is made upright both by his faith in God and by his good works, the former being demonstrated by the latter. His spiritual life is not consummated by faith in God—it begins there, and it is ethical conduct which brings him near to God." The Christian world has long debated "faith versus works." Why would such a debate be foreign to Judaism?
11. "Not the expounding of the Torah is the chief thing, but the doing of it." Why is this central in Judaism?
12. "Pessimism is a form of atheism." Why? Why are Jews admonished not to despair?

**Session Eight: THAT MEN SHOULD NOT ENJOY LIFE**

**Required reading:** Silver: Chapter 11

**Discussion questions:**

1. What is asceticism, and what are some of the underlying motivations of those who practice it? What ascetic motifs appear in Hinduism and Buddhism?



2. The Greeks and the Romans were highly receptive to the mystery religions. What was the nature of these mystery cults? What did they teach? In what ways were they ascetic and self-mortifying?
3. "Christianity in its early centuries was overwhelmingly ascetic in outlook, and came increasingly to extol self-denial, poverty and celibacy." Where did these ideas come from? The gnostic sects taught dualism of matter (hence the flesh and the body) and spirit and held that the material world was evil. How did these teachings affect the institution of marriage in Christianity? Attitudes towards sex? Toward worldly goods?
4. Early Christianity accepted the ideas of suffering and of martyrdom. For what reasons?
5. How does Judaism regard self-mortification? What is the principal fast day in the Jewish calendar? How long does it last?
6. Who were the Nazirites and the Rechabites? The Essenes? Did large numbers of Jews belong to these sects? Did they have any lasting influence on the development of Judaism?
7. "The renunciation of normal sex life was never regarded as a virtue in Judaism." Why not?
8. Where will we find ascetic trends in Jewish thought? Who was Bahya ibn Pakuda? Under what historical circumstances do you find examples of Jewish pietistic and mystical thought with ascetic tendencies?
9. How do you account for the climate of Jewish mystical thought in Safed in the 16th century? Who was Moses Hayim Luzzatto?
10. In what way was the Chasidic movement founded by the Baal Shem Tov a rebellion against the dark mood that oppressed Jews in the Middle Ages? "The Chasidim were not religious dissenters. They were not reformers of faith, doctrine, or law." What were they?
11. How did Maimonides and Judah Halevi define Judaism's position on asceticism?
12. Did Judaism make a virtue out of pain, suffering, poverty? Did it consider wealth evil, per se? How did Judaism look upon these afflictions?
13. What is the Jewish attitude toward the body and the soul?
14. How does Judaism regard life? The world? Food and drink? The enjoyment of life? Marriage? The possibilities for rejoicing?

### Session Nine: THAT MEN ARE NOT EQUAL

**Required reading:** Silver: Chapters 12 and 13

#### **Discussion questions:**

1. What are some of the ways in which the ancient world fostered and perpetuated inequality among human beings? What were the effects of the caste system in India? The institution of slavery in the Roman empire? The stratification of society in the feudal ages?
2. The evils of racism tainted society in Classical Greece. How?



3. What was the role of the Prophets in teaching human equality?
4. Was racialism a factor in the Jewish concept of "chosenness," and "holiness"? What were the implications of "holiness" and "chosenness"?
5. On what grounds did the Christian Church appropriate the claim to be "the true Israel"?
6. Why were the Israelites prohibited from mingling with the Seven Nations of Canaan? Jews were especially prohibited from marrying among the Ammonites and Moabites. When was this prohibition lifted? Why? Ruth was a Moabitess. What unusual honor is she accorded in Jewish tradition?
7. In what sense is Judaism a democratic faith?
8. How does the book of Jonah illustrate the Jewish idea that all people are the children of God?
9. How did Judaism curb the power of its kings? Of its priests? Do rabbis to this day have any religious privileges or religious exemptions different from those of other Jews?
10. (Chapter 13) Define these terms: fatalism, predestination, election. How could belief in them "utterly paralyze man's moral will"?
11. In what sense is the doctrine of moral self-determination "liberating"? Why, in an ethical religion, does the doctrine of moral responsibility go hand-in-hand with moral self-determination?
12. "To function as a moral being, man had to be dowered with free will, and consequently also with the capacity to do evil." Explain. Can there be growth if human beings are denied the opportunity to make mistakes?
13. There is a paradox in Jewish thought, in trying to reconcile the human being's freedom of choice with God's prescience and omniscience. Was Akiba able to resolve it? Has anyone resolved it? Is it necessary to resolve it?
14. Explain the concepts: "Everything is foreseen, yet free will is given to man" and "Everything is in the hands of God except the fear of God."
15. At one time, one used to hear that "society" was to blame for the high rate of crime and other evils. In other words, the offender bore little or no responsibility because "society" deprived him or her of social-cultural-economic opportunities. This argument made of the individual a puppet, utterly stripped of free will and the accompanying accountability for personal actions. Discuss this argument in the context of the Jewish insistence that human beings are endowed with free will.
16. "Real freedom consists in voluntarily assuming the yoke of the Law. Willfulness is a form of slavery—the more one assumes the liberty to do what one should not do, the heavier are the chains of his servitude." What are the limitations on the exercise of free will?

### Session Ten: THAT MEN SHOULD NOT RESIST EVIL

Required reading: Silver: Chapter 14



**Discussion questions:**

1. Where did the idea of nonresistance to evil originate? How is the idea linked to pessimism?
2. What ideas were in the air at the time of the Sermon on the Mount? Against what background should the Sermon be understood?
3. "Opposition to revolutionary measures against Rome (in the first century, C.E.) existed in many (Jewish) circles even among the Pharisees and the Sadducees." Dr. Silver is speaking of the revolt against Rome which resulted in the destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem in the year 70 C.E. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai was one of those who opposed the revolt. Were the motivations of the Jewish peace parties the same as those preached by Jesus?
4. Who was Count Leo Tolstoi? He died in 1910, well before the Russian Revolution and the rise of the Soviet dictatorship. What were his ideas?
5. What is the concept of passive resistance as practiced by Mahatma Gandhi? The late Martin Luther King, Jr. was a disciple of Gandhi. How did King use the technique to advance the cause of civil rights? Can passive resistance succeed in a case where the oppressor is ruthless and conscienceless?
6. "Judaism rejected all doctrines of nonresistance and all forms of pacifism." Why?
7. What are instances in which a Jew must act, even if his or her own life is placed in danger?
8. What is the difference between being forbearing and forgiving and turning the other cheek?
9. What is the Jewish principle of self-defense in personal and in national life? In a war for self-defense?
10. Where in world literature will you find war glorified? Did Judaism ever glorify war?
11. During the Vietnam war, we heard much about "just" and "unjust" wars. Can you give examples? There are those who are absolute pacifists, who would refuse to take part in any war, "just" or "unjust," and refuse to fight, even in a war of self-defense. There are others who are "selective pacifists," who would refuse to fight in an "unjust" war, but not in a war that is "just." What, in your view, should be grounds for exemption from military service in time of war? How do they compare with the grounds listed in Deuteronomy 20:5-8?

**Session Eleven: THAT DEATH IS BETTER THAN LIFE**

**Required reading:** Silver: Chapter 15

**Discussion questions:**

1. The ancient religions were preoccupied with death. Judaism, on the other hand, was preoccupied with life. What are the central Jewish teachings that emphasize life?
2. "Judaism made a determined effort to direct the attentions of men away from the realm of the dead, away from necrolatry (worship of the dead) and necromancy (divination through communication with the dead)." Why?
3. What does the phrase, "the Kingdom of God," mean in Judaism? In Christianity?



4. The word "apocalypse" means "any of a class of Jewish or Christian writings on divine revelation that appeared from about 200 B.C. to 350 A.D." The adjective "apocalyptic" means "affording a revelation or prophecy." There were innumerable apocalyptic books written in the period, yet only one, the book of Daniel, was ever included in the Hebrew Bible; and in the second century, the Rabbis banned all apocalyptic literature, except for the book of Daniel. Why were these eschatological works banned? ("Eschatology" means "doctrines concerning last, or final, matters, as death or the hereafter.")

5. For what reasons did the teachers of Judaism resist the concept of resurrection and the doctrine of immortality?

6. Despite prolonged resistance, toward the beginning of the Common Era "the doctrine of resurrection and immortality" were brought into "the framework of authoritative Judaism." Why?

7. "The Rabbis presented the doctrine of the immortality of the soul as a moral necessity." How did the doctrine relate to the problem of unmerited human suffering on earth?

8. The doctrine of resurrection is essential in Christianity. Why? Is it essential in Judaism? Why?

9. "Man should not look for or expect automatic compensations for his meritorious conduct, or automatic punishment for his evil conduct." What does Judaism teach about the reward of doing a good deed?

10. What are Jewish practices with regard to death, burial and mourning? What are the implications of excessive mourning?

### Session Twelve: DIFFERENCES AND UNDERLYING UNITY

**Required reading:** Silver: Chapter 16

#### **Discussion questions:**

1. At the opening of Chapter 16, Dr. Silver lists "the great new insights of Judaism . . . which gave it a distinctive stamp and character." What are they? Can you discuss each one and explain how they differed from ideas, beliefs or philosophies prevalent in the ancient world?

2. Where will you find these great Jewish insights? What do we mean when we refer to our "Jewish religious literature"?

3. "Judaism created a unique type of worship and a unique religious institution." What is this institution? How did it preserve Judaism? How did it determine the type of Christian worship? How was it the model for Islam?

4. "There is much which all religions have in common and much which differentiates them. Their common purpose in the world will not be advanced by merger or amalgamation." Why not?

5. "It is far better and more practical to look for ways of working together on the basis of a forthright recognition of dissimilarities rather than on a fictitious assumption of identity." In your view, what attitudes should govern inter-religious relations?

6. The overwhelming number of Jews are born into Judaism. Some remain Jews out of inertia or unquestioned acceptance of a fact of life. (A typical comment of such a Jew might be: "My parents and grandparents were Jewish. I've always been Jewish, and I've never given thought to becoming anything else.") Were you to be given a choice—now that you have studied the principal concepts of Judaism—would you consciously choose to be a Jew? Why? Which Jewish teachings especially appeal to you? Why?



AT THE TURNING

basic elements. Bergson knew the prophets of Israel, yet without realizing how in their messages the principle of justice which he found in them was complemented by the principle of love; but he knew not the road taken by the Jewish religion and consequently he did not consider the prophets in connection with the whole of Jewish religious history. The prophets protest against the religious failure of Israel, against the fact that God's demand to create a place on earth for His justice and His love has not been sufficiently complied with — neither by the people nor by the individuals within it — at least not in the measure compatible with the strength available and under the prevailing conditions. And the seed of the prophets is springing up; though late, it is sprouting into stronger and stronger growth. In the Diaspora, it is true, a comprehensive realization of the principle of justice could not be aspired to, since that would have required an autonomous national entity, autonomous national institutions, which could only be hoped for with the return to the Holy Land; but the higher, the decisive principle which alone can knit together the relationship to God and the relationship to man — the principle of love — requires neither organizations nor institutions but can be given effect at any time, at any place. The will to realization was not, however, confined to the individual. Within the

THE SILENT QUESTION

communal form of life adopted in the place of a state — that is, the local communities — active love in the guise of mutual help recurs as a basic social element. This structure found its perfection about two centuries ago in Hasidism, which was built on little communities bound together by brotherly love. An inner religious development of the highest significance corresponds to that tendency, the striving to bridge the gulf between love of God and love of man. Again the Hasidic movement succeeded in giving full effect to this striving. It teaches that the true meaning of love of one's neighbor is not that it is a command from God which we are to fulfill, but that through it and in it we meet God. This is shown by the interpretation of this command. It is not just written: "Love thy neighbor as thyself," as though the sentence ended there, but it goes on: "Love thy neighbor as thyself, I am the Lord." The grammatical construction of the original text shows quite clearly that the meaning is: You shall deal lovingly with your "neighbor," that is, with everyone you meet along life's road, and you shall deal with him as with one equal to yourself. The second part, however, adds: "I am the Lord" — and here the Hasidic interpretation comes in: "You think I am far away from you, but in your love for your neighbor you will find Me; not in his love for



#### AT THE TURNING

you but in yours for him." He who loves brings God and the world together.

The Hasidic teaching is the consummation of Judaism. And this is its message to all: *You yourself must begin*. Existence will remain meaningless for you if you yourself do not penetrate into it with active love and if you do not in this way discover its meaning for yourself. Everything is waiting to be hallowed by you; it is waiting to be disclosed in its meaning and to be realized in it by you. For the sake of this your beginning, God created the world. He has drawn it out of himself so that you may bring it closer to Him. Meet the world with the fullness of your being and you shall meet Him. That He Himself accepts from your hands what you have to give to the world, is His mercy. If you wish to believe, love!

Bergson speaks of an "active mysticism." Where is this to be found, if not here? Nowhere else is man's essential doing so closely bound up with the mystery of being. And for this very reason the answer to the silent question asked by the modern world is found herein. Will the world perceive it? But will Jewry itself perceive that its very existence depends upon the revival of its religious existence? The Jewish State may assure the future of a nation of Jews, even one with a culture of its own; Judaism will live only if it brings to life again the primeval Jewish relationship to God, the world and mankind.

#### THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN HEAVEN AND EARTH