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The Jewish Way of Life - Its Discipline, 1950.

THE JEWISH WAY OF LIFE - ITS DISCIPLINE

December 4, 1950

At our last service, you will recall, I spoke of "The Jewish Religion - Its Essence". I said ^{at the time} that the essence of Judaism may be summed up in two simple phrases, faith in ^{God who is} the perfect, ~~and~~ ^{man} and faith in ~~the per-~~ ^{perfectible}. Judaism ^{proclaims} a faith in a God who is not an impersonal, ~~and~~ non-moral force ⁱⁿ nature as were the gods of ~~the~~ the ancient ^{world} peoples, - but a God who ^{rules} ~~controls~~ all the forces of nature; who is not nature, but ^{He is} ~~nature~~ creator and governor, a God who is everywhere but whose completeness is exhausted nowhere.

"The heaven and the heavens of heaven cannot contain Thee." Nevertheless, "His glory fills the ^{whole} ~~entire~~ universe." ^{Judaism proclaims} A God who is far and yet near, ~~beyond and ever present~~, exalted ^{and transcendent} and yet ^{very close} ~~near~~ unto all those who call upon Him; ^{He is} a God who is beyond all time and space, and yet, is ^{man's} ~~the dwelling~~ ^{dwelling} place of all. ["] ~~"Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations."~~

Judaism proclaims ~~a faith in~~ a God who is One, the God of all creation, the God of all mankind - white and black, rich and poor, saints and sinners; ^{He} ~~a God~~ who demands justice of those who would worship Him, and love and ^{humility} ~~humanity~~ ^{His} ~~a God~~ whose especial wards are the weak ~~and the handi-~~ ~~capped~~, the poor, the denied and the dispossessed of the earth. ^{He is} a God ~~who~~ ^{who} abhors oppression and exploitation, who desires men to be free and at peace, to be forgiving and compassionate, ^{He is} a God who forgives sin ~~and evil doing~~ and who summons the sinner, ^{even} unto the very day of his death, to repent and return. Judaism proclaims ~~a faith in~~ a God who is both king and father. "Our Father, our King" is an oft-repeated phrase in our liturgy. ^{He is} a God to whom ^{we} ~~we~~ can call and be answered, ^{they can} ~~and~~ whom ~~we may~~ ^{they} trust even when ~~we~~ walk in the valley of the shadow of death. ^{He is} ~~a God~~ who is a refuge from adversity

~~a defeat~~, from the terrors of the unknown, from sorrow and bereavement;
~~a strength for the struggle of life and for the building of~~
~~the good society~~ ^{He is} the shield and buckler, the ever-present help in ^{time} trouble.

This is the first essential ^{doctrine} of Judaism - faith in a personal, just and loving God who is ^{Creator} One and Everlasting - a perfect God.

The second ~~part~~ ^{teaching of} essential Judaism is faith in man, in the perfectability of man. ~~Man is not perfect.~~ Man can never be God. Man is mortal, finite, limited. Man is a creature of God. He is neither all-knowing nor all-powerful nor ever will be. Nevertheless, ~~according to the doctrine of Judaism~~, man's ^{status} state is a very exalted one, and his destiny a very noble one. God created man in His own image. God breathed His spirit into him. Man is very important in God's scheme of things, and his life is sacred. The life of every individual is sacred. God set high goals for man and equipped him with intellectual and spiritual power to achieve them. Man can hew freedom out of necessity, knowledge out of ignorance and good out of evil. In this sense man is a co-creator with God.

To be sure, man will never be perfect. Perfection belongs to God. But man should reach out for what seems to be ~~the~~ unattainable; for he does not really know what is and what is not attainable, ^{and} ~~in~~ the very quest of what seems to be beyond his reach, ^{he} ~~will~~ will find deep satisfactions and ~~such~~ enrichment of mind and soul. If he fails, why ^{failure} ~~that~~ is not a sin! Let him try again! ~~God forgives sin.~~ The one unpardonable sin is the sin of not trying, of not aspiring, of not reaching out for the ^{challenging heights} ~~better and nobler~~

~~that~~ ^{Even as} Man is perfectible, ^{so is human} society, ~~is perfectible.~~ In the concept of Judaism the world is not running down into defeat and ~~annihilation.~~ ^{ultimate} ~~Quite the~~ ^{destruction as a clock} ~~contrary.~~ In spite of ^{all tragic road blocks and reverses} ~~temporary checks and set backs~~, mankind is moving forward, ^{sure} ~~moving forward~~ to a golden age ~~yet to come~~ - to "the ultimate day!"

when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea". This is the Messianic hope of Judaism. ^{Then shall come a day if so we will, when} ~~and~~ ^{evil} ~~crooked~~ ^{in the world} and cruel will vanish and pass away, ^{when} ~~and a time of~~ justice will ^{every} ~~each~~ man ^{will} ~~shall~~ dwell under his vine and under his fig tree and none shall make him afraid.

This is the core of Judaism, of which I spoke to you last time.

This morning I ^{wish to} ~~shall~~ speak ^{not only} ~~briefly~~ ^{to you on} "The Jewish Way of Life - Its Discipline". Judaism ~~was not content to~~ enunciated great theologic doctrines ^{and} moral principles. It also indicated ~~to men~~ ^{men could} helpful ways by which ~~to~~ arrive at these ideals. It offered them ~~also~~ a program and a technique.

This program included both institutions and ceremonies. To be sure, the true worship of God is not through ritual or cult or outward observance, ^{- but through goodness and aspiration.} "Thou

hast been told, O man, what is good and what the Lord doth require of Thee; only to do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with thy God". But every great idea needs the support of institutions to propogate and perpetuate it - ^{and attractive} it needs dynamic forms to express ^{and} symbolize it, and ^{to} make men ^{continuously} ~~constantly~~ aware of ^{its existence} ~~it~~ and of its challenge. Hence, every great religion has evolved concordant institutions and ceremonies to dramatize ^{their inner} ~~its~~ meaning and ^{mandates} ~~purpose~~.

The institution most characteristic of Judaism and the one most dearly beloved by Israel throughout the ages is the synagogue. I venture to say that the synagogue is the most original creation of the ^{Jewish people} ~~the~~. The temple of Jerusalem, which antedated the synagogue, was not an original creation of the genius of the Jew. Other religions had their temples; other peoples had their sacred shrines where sacrifices were offered and where priests ~~and other~~ ^{and attendants} officiated. There was nothing unique about the ancient temple in Jerusalem except that ^{while all other ancient shrines} it was dedicated to the One God. But no ancient people had an institution comparable to the synagogue - ~~place of worship~~, a house of God in which sacrifices were not offered, in which a priestly hierarchy did not officiate; a house of God which was just

a place of prayer, of study and of ^{religious} ~~the~~ education ~~of youth~~, a place where charity was disbursed, ^{and} where the stranger was welcomed and housed. ^{PP} The synagogue was born in exile - in the Babylonian exile in the sixth century before the common era. The Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem and its heart, the temple. The people were exiled and taken to Babylon. Many of them thought that they had been completely forsaken by their God, or ^{to help them} that their God was ~~completely~~ powerless because He could not save from destruction even His own sanctuary in Jerusalem.

^{grave} But in that spiritual crisis there arose prophets and sages ~~in Baby-~~ ~~lon~~ who taught the people that the whole earth ^{this} is full of the glory ~~of God~~, that God does not abide in any one place, and that wherever ^{devout} ~~a group of pious~~ men and women meet for prayer ~~and devotion~~ and study, there God is to be found. And so the ^{alien} ~~exiles~~, uprooted, ~~driven from their home~~, in a strange land, built for themselves synagogues, houses of worship, where they ~~would~~ assembled for prayer, ^{And spiritual fellowship} ~~and study~~. The synagogue was the creation of the Jewish layman. ~~It had no priesthood; it had no officialdom.~~ It was the most democratic religious institution ^{in the ancient world, and has continued to this day.} ~~known to antiquity.~~ ~~And Even after the~~ people had returned from ^{there} ~~exile~~ to Palestine and the temple was rebuilt, the synagogue had become so dear to ^{them} ~~the~~ hearts of the people that it was ~~never~~ abandoned. On the contrary, it continued to develop alongside of the temple, and in every community one or more synagogues were ^{founded.} ~~established~~. It was in the synagogue that the Rabbis expounded the law, interpreted it to meet the changing conditions of life. It was here that ^{the} children were taught the faith of their fathers. It was to the synagogue that the masses wended their way for instruction and guidance. It was to the synagogue that the poor came for help and relief.

^{Tradition has it} ~~We are told~~ that when the temple was destroyed ^{second} ~~the second time~~ in 70 A.D., there existed in the city of Jerusalem alone some 480 synagogues,

and attached to each was ~~a school~~ ^{a secondary} each one having attached to it a school and a high school, and a place for the reception of the stranger and the ~~poor~~ ^{poor} one. When the Jews were exiled a ~~second time~~ and scattered over the face of the earth, the synagogue went with them, ~~wandered with them~~ ^{wherever}, and ~~whether~~ ^{whether} they came to dwell in prosperous cities or in poverty-stricken ghettos, the synagogue was the ~~heart~~ ^{comforting} of their dwelling place. The synagogue safeguarded the spirit of the Jew. It preserved inviolate the faith of ~~the Jew~~ ^{Israel}.

This unique institution of Israel, the synagogue, has always been central in Jewish life. It must remain ~~central also~~ ^{may wish to evolve} in the future. Whatever concept of Jewish life we ~~built up~~ for ourselves, the synagogue must remain the focal point thereof, or Judaism and the Jew will cease to exist.

I know that there are people among us who try to construct a theory of Jewish life in which the synagogue and religion generally occupy a peripheral place, ~~a very small place, indeed~~ ^{on a tolerated one}. They are committing a ~~great~~ ^{grave} error. I

have searched high and low in Jewish history and literature to discover that the Jew at any time ~~sought to preserve his identity for its own sake or for~~ ^{strove and sacrificed} the sake of producing a great art or a great literature or a great science. ~~It was to preserve and hand down a great spiritual heritage - that he chose to survive.~~ ^{It was to preserve and hand down a great spiritual heritage - that he chose to survive.}

He ~~wished~~ ^{resolved} to live that his faith might live and that its life and light-giving truths might not perish from the earth. ~~It was to preserve their religion, laws and customs that the~~ ^{It was to preserve their religion, laws and customs that the}

It is loyalty to ~~the~~ ^{a covenanted} faith which spelled loyalty to the people. Whenever Judaism and its magnificent ~~symbol~~ ^{with which}, the synagogue, are relegated to ~~a~~ ^{secondary} insignificant position in Jewish life, Judaism and the Jew are endangered.

The synagogue, ~~then~~, must forever remain central in Jewish life. There is no Jewish way of life divorced from the synagogue or from ~~prayer~~ ^{the institution of} prayer, private and public.

Israel was first among the peoples ^{of the earth} to disassociate prayer from sacrifice, ~~and~~ prayer from magic. All ~~primitive~~ peoples pray. But in Israel

prayer first became ~~absolutely~~ disassociated from any act of sacrifice or from any attempt by magic to compel the Deity to do the will of the worshipper. Prayer in Israel ^{was early translated into} ~~became~~ devotion, communion, the outpouring of the soul. Prayer ^{even} transcended the ^{concept} ~~notion~~ of petition. ^{It became} ~~Prayer is~~ more than ~~mere~~ petition. ^{the} ~~Prayer is~~ more than mere asking for things. Prayer ^{became} ~~is~~ the desire of the human soul to reach up and commune with God; ^{It was} ~~prayer is~~ the invitation ^{extended by} ~~which~~ the soul of man ^{to} ~~effers~~ the grace of God to descend and dwell within it; ~~prayer is the yearning of the human soul to establish spiritual contact and kinship with Divinity.~~ There is no religion without prayer. A man who does not pray to God has no need of God, and God may as well not exist for him. Prayer, whether it be ^{private} ~~private~~ prayer or the equally important form of public worship, which ^{embodies} ~~expresses~~ the ideal of social unity and ^{corporate} ~~corporate~~ destiny, is for all time a central feature of the Jewish way of life.

The second institution of Judaism ^{WRHS} ~~is~~ the school - the school for religious education. Judaism has always maintained that its doctrines ^{which were} ~~first~~ propounded by prophet and seer ^{Torah means instruction,} ~~must be studied,~~ ^{must be meditated upon.} "The words of this Torah shall not depart from thy mouth or from the mouth of thy children." One of the first injunctions given to our people was, "Thou shalt teach them ^{- the doctrines of the faith -} diligently unto thy children." ~~The ignorant are not truly God-revering.~~ True faith and piety call for a spiritual maturity, ⁱⁿ the profoundest insights and the highest knowledge that the individual is capable of. That is why Israel was the first people ^{on earth} ~~of the world~~ to establish a universal school system. ^{Every community was required to provide} ~~The poorest and the humblest~~ ^{with the schooling - instruction} ~~along with the better situated received an education~~ in right living, ^{children even} ~~in~~ right thinking, and in right conduct. That is why the proportion of illiteracy in Israel was at all times, from earliest times to this, very small. Our people ~~always~~ always sought to supplement secular education with a full program of religious and ^{education,} ~~ethical training.~~ The religious school must still remain central in our way of life or Judaism ^{and our people} ~~will~~ cease to exist.

The home is the richest soil for the flowering of human personality. Write them - the words of God - upon the doorposts of the home - as an injunction to the parents

The third great ~~contribution~~ ^{contribution} of Judaism is the Jewish home. The

home as a sanctuary of ~~the living~~ God, and ~~mother and father~~ ^{parents} as officiating ministers at its high altars, charged with the rearing of their children in the love of God and the service of man - that, too, is a distinctive contribution of our faith. Marriage is holy ground. Judaism calls ^{ed} marriage ~~sanctification~~ ^{sanctification}. It is not an arrangement of convenience, entered into at will and dissolved at whim. It is a holy covenant between two souls pledged to revere one another, to face life's tasks together, sorrow, struggle, disillusionment, to be each other's complement, to build a home, and to shield and love the offspring of their union. The integrity of the family rather than the chance ^{and often putative and illusory} happiness of the individual ^{must} ~~be~~ be the primary concern.

The role of the father in the home is more than that of ~~material~~ provider. He is teacher, counselor, guide. ~~He must strive to be worthy of the child's love, respect and emulation.~~ ^{of him} The Bible speaks of the spiritual instruction of the mother. What inspiration may not a mother give to the developing heart and mind of childhood. The child in the home ^{is} ~~should be~~ the object of love and solicitude, not of indulgence ^{or} ~~and~~ pampering. The child ^{is to be} ~~should be~~ trained ^{with} ~~with~~ the obligations of cooperative living. The home is a spiritual entity, built out of the imponderable things of the spirit.

~~Loyalties, memories, imagination, sacrifices, joy, laughter and tears build a home.~~ ^{Reverence, loyalty, tact and delicacy maintain it.}

trans. Judaism Synagogue, School and home - these are the major spiritual institutions. Finally, friends, there are also customs and ceremonies which help men and women to move happily ^{more} ~~in~~ in the Jewish way of life. ^{we} ~~we~~ think in terms of symbols, and ~~we~~ are

constantly acting ceremonies. Every human being has his birthdays and his anniversaries; every people has its national holidays. Every enduring ideal

~~will seek to express~~ ^{express} itself in some tangible, dramatic form ⁱⁿ ~~in~~ ceremonies. ^{Religion, too, has its} And so with the ceremonies ^{of faith}. There is no great religion without its

historic anniversaries ~~and~~ its celebrations, ~~and~~ its rituals. We have our Sabbath, our Passover, our Shabuoth, our Succoth, our Purim, our Chanukah; we have numerous ~~beautiful~~ ^{colorful memory-laden} ceremonies which have their pedagogic value ^{for us}, their inspirational value, their survival value, ~~in Jewish life, and~~ they should not be abandoned. We may not be able to observe them as completely as did our forebears who lived under different conditions and different economic circumstances. But that does not mean that we should discard them ~~all~~ together. Our religion would lose much of its poetry, its romance, its charm, if it were stripped of all of its religious symbolism, ^{and our lives would be the poorer for it.}

These, then, are the institutions and ceremonies of Judaism. They all aim at one thing - to make religion ^{vital} ~~more~~ in the lives of men. They aim at the sanctification of human life. Their purpose is to remind us of the holiness inherent in the every-day experiences of life, of the spiritual beauty which might be discovered in every act of human life. The synagogue, the school, the home, the religious practices and observances - they are not ^{to be sure -} the heart of our faith, but they lead directly to the heart of faith, ^{which have kindled the torches of the great}

May we remain steadfast to the eternal principles of Judaism, ^{and} ^{valuable} ^{religious} may we find in its historic institutions and practices aids and guides towards ~~our~~ steadfastness and loyalty. Amen.