



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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Series IV: Sermons, 1914-1963, undated.

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What then is Judaism?, 1952.

1/ During the past few weeks, I have spoken to you on the differences (1) which exist between Judaism and some, the other great religious systems of mankind. I did not dwell on the slight but on the radical differences in outlook, in theology and in ethics.

This morning I should like to summarize our discussions, and by restating its positive doctrines, ~~and~~ point out the distinctive pattern of Judaism - and its essential message to mankind.

2/ I should like to remind you again, that in a religion as old as ours, reaching across many centuries and many lands, embracing many cultures, and reflecting the great variety of experiences of our people there are bound to be many levels of development, many varied and shifting emphases, highways & byways of thought.

Judaism is not a fixed and inveterate set of dogmas, doctrines and observances which have remained constant and inflexible through the centuries. Judaism is not a formalized creed consisting of so many articles of faith which has received the official stamp of approval of some authorized church body council. In fact no attempt was made to formulate a definition of Judaism until the Middle Ages - 1500 yrs after the time of the great prophets of Israel.

Nor is Judaism based on some ~~unusual~~ ^{unusual} event in the history of the Jewish people, or on some extraordinary personality, although historic events and great personalities played a significant role in the development of the faith.

Rather is it the evolving faith and the ethical thinking of a spiritually sensitive people through long centuries of time, and it is ~~the~~ its religious sense or genius which gives organic unity to ~~the~~ the faith which we call Judaism.

prevalent for sin, which can be averted by true repentance, and that the main spiritual concern should be with life, this side, the "here-and-now" the hidden things belong unto the Lord and not, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words, the Law" - these are the basic ideas of Judaism and with force, Judaism. Some, the great religious of mankind possessed one or another, these tenets, some ~~then~~ ^{absorbed} them from Judaism, but Judaism has woven them all into a single and distinct pattern, integrated and correlated them into a unique religious philosophy and moral code which have tremendously influenced the civilization, the world.

3/1. Israel's Bible is the sacred book of half, mankind. The psalms, Israel are songs is everywhere, everyone knows every story, the Ten Commandments are the depths of modern civilization. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" came to the Western world out, the pages, the book, the critics which the world can hardly know so well and far as it to his disciples as ~~the greatest commandment in the Law~~ summing up, along with the command to love God, the whole of the Law and the prophets. In this he was in full agreement with the great Rabbi, Hillel, an early Christian - Jesus / his - who, when asked by an importuned man - he - priests to teach him the whole of the Law, Judaism while standing on one foot - replied - ~~all in all~~ - this is the whole, the Law - the rest is commentary - so and so on!

4) Judaism is the religion, the Jewish people, evolved by it and entrusted to it to spread its teachings to the whole world.

The message ^{Judaism} is universal. Its God is the God of the whole mankind. ^{Its Temple} ~~His House~~ is a house, a place for all people.

Israel conceived itself as a ^{a misbegotten-downcast people} covenanted people, trained through a self-imposed discipline, ^{to be} an army, the Lord, to carry the revelation, the law of God and His mandates of faith and right living to all men. It regarded itself as having been chosen ^{because it was first born to the world} for this mission, ^{to be a light} unto the nations. ^{It was} chosen not for any special favors or privileges - but for the hard, exacting obligations of spiritual leadership which is so often a cross of thorns.

~~It is self-imposed discipline of religious observances and practices, ^{to keep their life, to keep their faith, to keep their message} and spiritual and ethical message, ^{which is the whole world} of another sun, of justice, love, brotherhood and peace ^{for the whole world}.~~

As an historic faith, infused with the life experience of a ~~the Jewish people~~ ^{naturally} Jewish people, Judaism ~~is~~ reflects in some, its customs, ~~observances~~ ^{and} rituals and ceremonies and festivals ~~the special that~~ ^{the} experience ^{and} the specific needs and hopes of the ^{Jewish nation} community; but the light of its spiritual and ethical vision ^{was} for the whole mankind; Judaism excluded no one from sharing in its faith because of race or caste. In fact no one needs to be ~~formally~~ ^{formally} admitted into its fold in order to be saved. The righteous

among the gentiles will have a portion in the world to come, (5) and a ~~heathen~~ non-Jew who observes the moral law is preferred to the High Priest in the Temple who ignores it - declared the Rabbis.

6/. The crown jewels of Judaism are, of course, to be found in the Bible which has been correctly called "the epic, the world", "the Book of the Ages". The Bible is inextricably bound up with the culture, ethics, history, art and literature of half the world. It has nourished the hearts and minds of countless generations and has guided, challenged and inspired the humble and the great, the idealist, the social reformer, the peace advocate, the champion of freedom and democracy, the dreamer, ~~the poet~~ mankind's great dreams. Its truths are inexhaustible and deathless, and its freshness and relevancy, unaging. It has been called "the Magna Charter of the poor and the oppressed", "the most democratic book in the world".

But the spiritual treasures of Judaism are not limited to the Bible. Subsequent ages produced sages, seers, and Rabbis whose spiritual wisdom is embedded in later Jewish writings, in the Apocrypha, the Talmud, the Midrash and the individual works of scholars, poets and philosophers who have continued to this day. Their teachings constitute an integral part of the endlessly replenished religious literature of Judaism.

7/. Along with a unique religious literature, Judaism gave to the world also a unique type of worship and a unique religious institutions - the Synagogue. The eminent Christian scholar and historian, viz., Robert Herford, declared:

"With the Synagogue began a new type of worship in the

history of humanity, the type of corporeal worship. In all their long history, the Jewish people have done scarcely anything more wonderful than to create the Synagogue. No human institution has a longer continuous history, and none has done more for the uplifting, the human race."

and the great American and the great American scholar, Prof. George Foot Moore, wrote: (Intro. I p. 285)

8/. What was it, thing that was ^{disputed} ~~taught~~ in the Synagogue throughout the long centuries, ~~where the Bible gave generation to generation~~ - using the sacred texts, the Bible, and the ~~received teachings of~~ law and law, the Rabbin, ~~and the rabbis~~ ^{as its subject matter?} What basic ideas - what ^{vital} ~~indispensable~~ doctrines - what truths by which alone man can live and manhood prosper?

They were all concerned with the sanctification of human life! In ~~any~~ one way or another - they all tended to exalt, deepen, and expand the spiritual domain of man. "Be ye holy for I the Lord, your God am holy" - To approximate perfection - that measure of perfection which is attainable to mortal man, "walk thou before Me" - and become perfect ^{that was its measure} (if you will) become complete" (Lev. 19:2). - first said to Abraham.

The great Jewish philosopher Maimonides, the 12th-century;

- "Think not meanness & the self and despair not of perfection". (1)
- Purity of life, purity of action, purity of thought, purity of family life - are attributes of perfection within the reach of man.

- Not asceticism - ~~not self~~ a needless austerity -
- not the rejection of life and its innocent pleasures -
- not fear of life or contempt of life - not engrossed
other-worldliness - but - the sanctification of life -
- The spiritually wholesome and harmonious life - well-balanced - in which body, mind and soul are ^{as} perfected -

= The aspiring life - resolutely and confidently climbing
the steps of inadequacy, of error, of ignorance,
of self-aidance to the higher levels - when
man becomes "a little lower than the angels"

= The life exalted thru justice, love and humility in
the service of God and man - is resisting evil.
is combating social injustice & ^{many ways} his struggle
and, if need be, in suffering, to establish God's Kingdom
where, whatever else else, ^{must} ~~be~~ certainly be done in this
world.

9). God has given man tools, adequate for the task. He is endowed (8) with mental and spiritual power, and with freedom to use and, ~~when~~ if need be, to surmount the limitations of heredity and environment. ~~History~~ Human history is evidence of steady progress beyond heredity and environment toward a world order man to man's higher aspirations —

Man must make the ^{- this is the prophetic challenge} effort & achieve success as measured not by the degree of achievement but by degree of earnest ^{moral} effort. It is ~~by~~ the direction in which we move — not by the goals we reach that we are judged in the sight of God. The divine is condemned only when he refuses to return from his evil way. ~~The righteous is the man who walks~~

~~And God~~ "The Lord regardeth the way, the righteous."

10). Because all life is holy — and every life is sacred — no ^{one} must rob his neighbor ^{his freedom} of his dignity, ^{his spiritual} of his ^{his} inalienable rights. The ^{love & charity and the} essential democracy of Judaism ~~was~~ the result of no economic determination, ~~of~~ no ^{class} struggle in ancient Israel, and ~~of~~ no abstract philosophical speculations. ~~They~~ They ^{directly} ~~flowed~~ ^{are} the fundamental dogma that "man is made in the image of God". Every human life is a reflex of divinity — an end in ~~itself~~ ^{itself} — and therefore inviolable. Every act, wrong and in justice ^{which} mars the life, man ~~and~~ defaces also the image of God. Oppression, slavery and exploitation are ^{more} than violations, the laws of society. They are sacrilege! They threaten the holy life in man — which is God's life. They distort and mutilate that which is

God ordained ~~to be~~ to be: "the free & untrammelled
supplement of each and every human personality."

10). Because all life is holy - war is ~~a desecration~~ ^{a desecration}
Judaism is not pacifist - but it abhorred war - and
was first to project ~~into~~ the vision of a warless
society in a age which accepted war as being in
the nature of things and ~~justified~~ ^{justified} the prophets of Israel
called upon the nations, the earth to "turn their swords
into plowshares and beam war no more". The real God
Almighty - is still.

11). This, then, is Judaism - the source and fountain-head of all
that the Western world has of religion and morality - of its
ideas of human dignity, ~~of liberty and democracy~~ ^{of liberty and democracy},
brotherhood and peace - a religion of ~~humanity~~ ^{humaneness}
and humanity - of wide horizons but ~~of deep roots~~ ^{of deep roots} -
very ~~lovable~~ ^{lovable} and very workable - a religion which places a high
estimate of man's life, on his creative power, on his ~~power~~ ^{heroic}
destiny - a religion which calls for the fullest development
of all man's faculties - ~~heart mind~~ ^{physical, mental}
and spiritual for the service of God and man.

It is this faith - which has survived the persecutions
of the centuries ~~and the with its light undimmed~~ - that the
Bible ~~scriptural~~ ^{scriptural} texts speak:

" The law, the Lord is perfect - restoring the soul - ...

The precepts, the Lord are right - rejoicing the heart..

The commandment, the Lord is pure - enlightening the eyes

- It is a law, life to them that lay hold of it

- Its ways are ways, pleasantness and all its paths are peace



- 1/ 4000 - changed - streams - recapitulate - Nevertheless -
- 2/ "Happy in consistency" - Peace & Bliss - 2012 - Karavels
Child of God & no man divine.
- 3/ Saved - Buddhism - Christianity - Judaism - 2012
- 4/ Enjoyment of life - afraid of life - defied life - prison
Dualism. Matter is Evil - Desires are sinful
Asceticism - Platonism - Cynicism & Christianity
Existentialism.
- No Moralities . 2012 11/11 2/1

- 5/ Free Will - Fate - Anthology - "Whether in the flesh"
Moira - Kismet - Karma - No word in Hebrew
- 6/ Man should not resist Evil - pacifism - non-resistance
Turn the other cheek
Man should overcome Evil - if necessary, by Force
2012 2/11 2/1

Collect - Prophetic - Interpretation - not laborious

- 7/ Equality - Barbarian - Castes - Plato & Aristotle
denied Human Equality - "Some men are by nature
free - others slaves"
No "intermediates" in Jud. - One Law - Moses

Adam

- 8/ What, then, is Judaism? (Kierkegaard)