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THE DEMOCRATIC IMPULSE IN
JEWISH HISTORY

An Essay

By

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THE DEMOCRATIC IMPULSE IN JEWISH HISTORY

BY

ABBA HILLEL SILVER

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(Gal. 1)

It is highly interesting to note how persistent and dominant has been the democratic impulse in Jewish history - alike in the political life of the people as in its economic and religious life.

When our nomadic forbears appeared on the frontiers of Canaan to begin their amazing career in the world, they had already been acted upon and determined by countless generations of desert experience and mores. The hard, uncertain and migratory conditions of desert life make for a rude equality and a primitive freedom among the wandering tribes. There are no kings in the desert. The tribal head is only the first among equals. The desert knows of no military aristocracy, for all adult males are fighters. No family claims especial nobility of ancestry for all members of a clan are blood relations. The rule of the rich is unknown for the disparity between rich and poor is slight and many tribes are communistic in structure. No priestly hierarchy exists and ritualistic functions are in most instances performed by the lay head of the family. The nomadic tribe is a rudimentary political, economic and religious democracy. Numberless centuries stamped these features upon the character of our desert ancestors long before they entered the settled agricultural life of Canaan.

From their scattered entrance into Canaan until the establishment of the monarchy, centuries elapsed - turbulent and formative centuries, during which the tribes of Israel in their various groupings were led by war chieftains, summoned by the people to command whenever an emergency arose. These chieftains returned to civilian life when

the emergency was past. The desert tradition strenuously resisted national consolidation under one sovereign ruler. Only the threat of foreign invasions, particularly that of the Philistines, forced the tribes to seek political unification under a monarch. A reading of the Biblical records shows how distinctly distasteful this compulsory monarchization proved to the best spirits of the people. Constrained to yield to a necessity, they nevertheless refused to make any intellectual concessions to it. The prophet Samuel interpreted the demand for a king as rebellion against God, as evidence of the people's sinfulness and degradation and as a culpable mimicry of the heathen. Contrast this Judaic point of view with the Greek of Plato and Aristotle. The ideal polity, Plato maintained, was the monarchy and the ideal ruler of his Republic was the king who is also philosopher and warrior. Aristotle regarded kingship as "the primary or most divine form of government."

Among the peoples of antiquity, even among the most enlightened, kings were deified, sacrifices were offered to them and the most extravagant titles and attributes were ascribed to them. Thus the kings of Egypt were addressed as "Lord of heaven, lord of earth, sun, life of the whole world, lord of time... creator of the harvest, maker and fashioner of mortals... giver of life to all the host of gods"... There was no king-worship in Israel, and a Hebrew king to whom a heathen ruler sought to attribute miraculous healing powers replied: "Am I a God, to kill and to make alive?".... The highest tribute which the Bible pays to a ruler is: "He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord"....

No revolutionary literature of mankind breathes a profounder distrust of royalty and indicts in harsher terms the ways of kings, their despoliations and corruptions, than the eighth chapter of the First Book of Samuel. Reflected in the Biblical account of the rise of the monarchy, one finds not only the struggle between the theocratic and the monarchic systems of government, - between priestcraft and kingcraft, - but also and more particularly the unrelenting conflict between the democratic and the autocratic principles which raged throughout the political history of Israel, and, as we shall see in a moment, through its economic and religious history as well.

— Hard was the road which royalty travelled in Israel. Its kings, with rare exceptions, never arrived at that absolutism possessed by the potentates of other ancient Oriental kingdoms. Straightway upon the selection of Saul, the prophet Samuel was quick to define and circumscribe the scope and powers of the king: "Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord." The contents of this book may be gathered from the Deuteronomic Code where the king is forwarned not to multiply horses and wealth

gal. 2

and wives, and above all, not to permit his heart "to be lifted up above his brethren." Samuel loses no time in impressing upon the people that allegiance to the Lord must at all times be prior to allegiance to the king.

At decisive moments the people asserted their authority against the will of the king. Frequently they rebelled. Hot upon the heels of Saul's election a revolution broke out, led by people whom the dynastic chronicler terms "base fellows" - but revolutionists have always been called "base fellows".... These "base fellows" despised Saul and cried out: "How shall this man save us?" This revolution was seemingly of such proportions that the kingdom had to be "renewed" in Gilgal. Samuel himself anointed the rebel David, king, during Saul's lifetime, not because he disliked Saul - for the Bible takes occasion to point out that Samuel loved Saul and mourned for him when misfortune overtook him - but because Saul had usurped powers not delegated to him and because he did not follow rigidly the instructions of the prophet.

David's reign was beset with revolutions and upon the death of his son, Solomon, the empire was rent in twain by a popular revolution against royal oppression and arrogance. At times the people dethroned one ruler and elected another in his place. At least in five instances the Bible clearly states that the populace elected the king.

The kings were constantly under the moral surveillance of the prophets - those stern monitors of the great democratic desert tradition of the race. In the name of a law higher than that of kings,

and exalted are the implications of the doctrine: (~~)~~) - "For unto me are the children of Israel slaves; they are not slaves unto slaves."

— The great social message of Israel - its heroic code of justice - is incomprehensible without an understanding of the pervading democratic spirit of the race. Every individual life was conceived to be inviolable, a reflex of divinity and an end in the cosmic scheme. Every act of wrong and injustice which mars the life of a man, defaces also the image of God. Oppression and exploitation are therefore more than violations of the laws of society. They are sacrilege and blasphemy. They thwart life - God's life in every man; they distort and mutilate that which is the end and goal of all being - the free untrammelled unfoldment of every human personality.

And it was from the lips of men who had drunk deep of this democratic tradition of the race that the first great cry for justice and economic freedom leaped out upon the world. It was the intrepid spokesmen of the immemorial desert traditions of equality and mutuality who wielded the scorpion whip of their fury upon those who ground the faces of the poor and turned aside the way of the humble, and who pleaded the cause of the orphan and the widow, the beaten and the broken of life.

gal. 3 [This same democratic impulse is strongly in evidence also in the religious history of Israel. A bitter and determined war was waged through the ages upon ecclesiastical dictatorship. Among ancient peoples theocracy was tantamount to priestly domination and assumed the form of an esoteric ritualism presided over by a privileged and exclusive hierarchy. The racial genius of Israel lifted theocracy from the plane of sacerdotalism unto the plane of moral idealism and proceeded to summon all men, regardless of birth or station, to share in

a kingdom of moral values, to live as equals in the free domain of the spirit.

Here again, the prophet was the protagonist of the democratic tradition. He was the pitiless enemy of priestly privilege. Prophecy was not only the protest against idolatry - against the theriomorphic polytheism and the anthropomorphic monotheism of the day. It was not only a denial of the primacy of cult and ritual in religion. It was not only the upreaching of the morally sensitized spirit of the race for a nobler and juster order of society. It was an impassioned claim, springing from the very depths of the people's essential self, for full lay participation in the spiritual heritage of the race and for unrestricted democratic leadership in religion.

The priest, to be sure, is privileged to teach the Law, and his lips may keep knowledge. But so also may the layman who qualifies himself for that service. And the word of God may come to all men, to the shepherd, the tradesman, the dresser of sycamore trees, to the humblest of the humble. The priest may perform the indispensable ritual of the sanctuary - but he is possessed of no occult powers, no inviolate office, no exclusive sanctity, no preferred moral status. He must submit to the same moral law which is binding alike upon king, priest, prophet or man of the people.

The prophet was as resolute in his denunciation of priests for moral delinquency as of kings, false prophets or common people. In a religious democracy there are no moral immunities for select groups. Jeremiah interprets his divine call to mean that he must become "a fortified city and an iron pillar, and brazen walls, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof,

and against the people of the land." Jeremiah and his spiritual kinsmen dared to call the priests, bulwarked behind the spurious sanctity of their office, vile, profane, murderers, despisers of God's name, polluters of the sanctuary, violators of the Law, teachers for hire In none of the religious literature of ancient peoples can one find such unsparing criticism of priestcraft.

The great rebellion of Korah and of the leaders of Israel against the hierarchic claims put forth by the priestly class recorded in the Book of Numbers, is the classic instance of the refusal of the Jewish laity to assign special sanctity and privilege to any group in Israel. The rebels were not non-descript malcontents. They were the ~~the~~ ~~princes~~ "princes of the congregation, the elect men of the assembly, men of renown." "And they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron [whose names are here used by the priestly writer for his own end] and said unto them; ye take too much upon yourselves seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift ye up yourselves before the assembly of the Lord?" It was of course no answer to have the earth conveniently swallow up these rebels alive. Korah's contention was echoed and re-echoed through all the succeeding generations, for the racial daimon, the essential genius of the people spoke through him.

The priestcraft sought to make of the Jewish laity in relation to the sanctities of their faith "zarim" - ~~strangers~~ strangers. Prophecy sought to make of them ~~a kingdom of priests and a holy nation~~ "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." Similarly the false prophets sought to restrict the privilege of prophecy to a few "concessionaires" or professionals. When Eldad and Medad began to prophesy in the camp, Joshua, who here acts as the spokesman of the older tradition of professional prophecy, cried out unto Moses: "My Lord Moses shut them in!" But Moses, who represents the true genius of Israel replied, "Art thou jealous for my

sake? Would that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His spirit upon them."

In post-exilic times the scribes and rabbis continued the democratic tradition of the prophets and extended it. With the destruction of the Temple democratic Judaism scored a major victory. Thereafter a new institution began its ascendancy in Jewish life - the Synagogue - the creation of Jewish laymen and the noblest and most democratic achievement of Israel. This democratic lay institution soon became the spiritual center of Jewish ^{gul. 3}life. Through the succeeding centuries it was the home of the democratic religious leaders in Israel who frequently felt themselves called upon to challenge the ecclesiastic hierarchy which had entrenched itself in the Temple. The Bible was edited and canonized largely by lay leaders. The right of teaching the Law and of interpreting it both legally and homiletically was steadily taken over by them. They simply repudiated the priestly monopoly of the Torah. They proceeded to ordain prayers and to fix the lay ritual. The ritual of the synagogue was in itself a triumph of democratic thought. It depended upon no priest or Rabbi or other indispensable functionary. It called for no special locale or shrine or sanctuary. Its liturgy was completely dissociated from sacrifice and all forms of sacramentalism. Wherever ten Jewish laymen assembled for worship, there was a synagogue. Lay leaders framed laws and regulations for the guidance of the people. In the course of time, they even prescribed laws for the priests and supervised the performance of the priestly duties within the Temple itself. The status of the priest was radically changed. He came to be merely a commissioned agent of the people, possessing only delegated authority. Thus even the High Priest on Atonement Day was reminded by the Elders of the Tribunal, the Zikḡene Bet Din, composed largely of laymen: "we are the representatives of the Tribunal and thou art our representa-

tives and the Tribunal's; we adjure thee by Him who caused His name to dwell in this House not to deviate in a single instance from the instructions which we gave thee."

The protracted struggle between the Sadducees and the Pharisees was but another phase of the historic conflict between the autocratic and democratic principles in Jewish life. The Sadducees, clinging to a tradition common to all the priestly classes of antiquity, maintained that they were the sole monitors of the Law and the exclusive repository of legislative power in matters religious. They resented what they regarded as unsecular usurpation and the unholy intrusion of laymen into precincts sacred unto themselves.

The Pharisees, on the other hand, who were the spiritual heirs of the prophets, declared "That God hath given unto all as an heritage - the kingdom, the priesthood and the sanctuary." "The Torah which Moses commanded us is the inheritance of the house of Israel." Hence every Israelite properly trained is qualified to share in the sovereign freedom of teaching and expounding the Law, of discovering its recondite meanings and of applying it to the problems and conditions of his time.

TP It is no accident of history that Israel was the first nation in the world to develop a universal system of popular education for both young and old, rich and poor. Among no other people was so much stress laid upon the education of children, of all children. The school took precedence over the synagogue. The first charge upon a community was the maintenance of its schools and the support of its teachers. A city without a school was to be shunned as doomed. A scholar who studied the Torah but did not teach it to others was regarded as a contemner of God's word. On the other hand he who taught a child Torah was assured of a portion in the world to come. Especially praiseworthy was he who taught the child of an Am Ha-aretz- the unlettered

common man. The watch-word of the Men of The Great Community was "Raise up many disciples!" It was no idle boast of Josephus when he declared: "Our principal care is to educate our children well"; and one need but read Nathan Hannover's account of the remarkable system of education which was in operation in the Polish Jewish communities, seventeen centuries later, to realize how ~~great~~ uninterrupted the tradition of democratic education continued in Israel throughout the ages.

The Pharisees took the Biblical injunction: "And ye shall be called the priests of the Lord" to be more than a figure of speech. They set about to train the children of Israel into a discipline and a mode of sanctified living which would justify this appellation. Many of the regulations touching dress, conduct and food which they prescribed for the laymen were in the first instance intended for priests only. They wished to bridge the gap between priest and layman, to democratize the concept of sanctification.

Some of the extremists among the Pharisees, holding that sanctification was the prerogative of all Israelites and in an effort to out-priest the priest, organized the Haburah, a fraternity which in matters of Levitical purity was even more exacting than the code binding upon priests. Members of such a Haburah regarded even the uninitiated High Priest as an Am Ha-aretz. Back of this exotic fraternity was the thought that holiness even in its ritualistic sense belonged to no hereditary class but must be and can be acquired by anyone through a rigid discipline of self-purification.

Qual. 5 There came a time however, when Pharisaism itself became undemocratic. Post-exilic leaders early maintained that prophecy ceased with the exile. Thereafter religious truth could come only by way of the interpretation of Scriptures, not by way of revelation. In matters of law even the Bat Kol, the Voice echoed from Heaven, -

a species of attenuated revelation - is to be ignored. The method of interpretation became as a matter of course more and more involved and technical as time went on. Only the skilled and the carefully trained students ~~()~~ who were acquainted with all the intricacies of Rabbinic hermeneutics came to be regarded as qualified teachers. Religious leadership was again narrowly restricted. An ever-widening gulf set in between the Rabbinic scholars and the masses. When the legal system of the Rabbis was finally codified in the Talmud and assumed an authority second only to that of the Bible, Rabbinism became as strongly entrenched in it, as exclusive and domineering as the priests had been in the Temple. An aristocracy of learning - a dry, hard, exclusive learning, quite inaccessible to the common man, superseded the aristocracy of sacerdotalism. The masses were again excluded from their spiritual patrimony.

The people were bound to rebel; and they did rebel. In the popular Messianic movements during the two centuries following the compilation of the Talmud we already find strong anti-Rabbinic tendencies. But the great rebellion expressed itself in two ways; Karaism and mysticism.

Karaism sought to break the domination of the Rabbis by completely repudiating their authority to interpret the Bible and by appealing to a literal reading of the sacred text. It is true that Karaism was, in a sense, a throw-back to Sadduceeism but it was prompted by none of the priestly presumptions of religious franchise and vested interests.

Jewish mysticism was an effort to re-discover a world in which the religious spirit of the race could again adventure free and undeterred, and where the souls of men, starved by Rabbinic formalism, could feed again upon the glories and glamour of new revelations. Like Karaism Jewish mysticism sought its freedom in the Bible, but unlike Karaism it

rights and for the rule of the many in place of the few. It went much deeper. At the heart of it was a tremendous dogma, /the like of which is not to be found among any other people, - an astounding ideologic fixation, if you will, a spiritual "fiction" of marvelous potency woven by the racial psyche and forever after inseparable from the life and thought processes of the people. God has made an eternal covenant with the whole House of Israel, that Israel as a people should become His pledged servant and emissary. This covenant was made with every Israelite, - king, priest, prophet and common man. "Ye are standing this day all of you before the Lord, your God: your heads, your tribes, your elders, and your officers, even all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the so-
jul. 6 journer that is in the midst of thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water; that thou shouldest enter into the covenant of the Lord thy God, and into His oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day; that He may establish thee this day unto Himself for a people, and that He may be unto thee a God, as He spoke unto thee and as He swore unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath, but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day."

For the first time in the history of mankind a whole people conceived of itself as having been consecrated into an everlasting priesthood and as having been commissioned to perform those functions which among other peoples were relegated to a small official group of priests. Religion was never so democratized!

"And ye shall be unto me holy men!" Nothing is so basic in the religious philosophy of the Bible as this concept of the covenant

and its implied sanctification of the whole people of Israel. And strange and difficult as this unparalleled idea of the mass ordination of a whole people may appear, Israel clung to it tenaciously throughout its history. It became the essential tradition of Israel. One may not like this tradition. One may question its cogency. One may feel that we have now come at the end of a way of thought and that we should repudiate it. One may urge that the time has come for us to make the Great Refusal. That may be. But we cannot revamp history nor reshape the past of a people. This covenant-tradition runs like a golden thread throughout our prophetic and apocalyptic literature, our Halacha and Hagada, our liturgy and hymnology, through Kabbalism and Chassidism. It is to be found also in the deeper layers of modern Jewish nationalism.

Thus the foremost philosopher of modern Jewish nationalism, Achad Ha-am, was a most eloquent and courageous spokesman of the ideal of the mission of Israel. He was frequently driven to attack what he regarded as the assimilationist tendencies of Western European Liberal Judaism and its false interpretation of the mission ideal, but he boldly made the latter the chief corner-stone of his philosophy of cultural Zionism. This seems to have escaped the notice of many of his disciples. Writing after the first Zionist Congress in 1897, Achad Ha-am stated - and at the time he created a furor in Jewish circles - that he was not at all sure that Israel was ready to assume the role of a political nation. Furthermore that even if ^{it} he were prepared and even if permission were granted to Israel to assume ^{its} his place as a political entity in the world, he was not at all sure that that would represent the fulfilment of his destiny ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~. Israel, he argued, has a higher destiny to achieve. Two thousand years of heroic suffering and martyrdom can not find their compensation in the right to play the role of a pitifully small state in the world of political intrigue, a pawn in the hands of scheming international diplomats. "The reward must be according to the suffering." An ancient people which has been "a light unto the nations" can not and should not content itself with the moiety of political autonomy enjoyed by peoples many of whom are culturally and historically insignificant and none of whom suffered as Israel has suffered. ←

It was neither a matter of accident nor of slight moment that prophets arose in Israel who visioned "the end of days" when righteousness would be established in the world. This universal humanitarian ideal has been and must continue always to be an integral part of the ideal of Jewish nationalism. "The salvation of Israel will come to pass through prophets and not through diplomats."

Jewish literature becomes incomprehensible and its most exalted and revealing passages read like sheer rhetoric or braggadocio, unless one bears in mind this altogether unique motif in Jewish life. When our sages speak of Israel as "the chosen of the Lord," "His peculiar inheritance", "His first-born", "the light bringer of the world", "the one indispensable nation"; when Halevi declares that "Israel is the heart of the world, that the gift of prophecy was bestowed upon Israel alone and that all mankind exists for the sake of Israel even as Israel exists for the sake of the prophets"; when Gersonides declares that "this people Israel must dwell alone in order that it might be separated from all other peoples and be holier than them"; when Bachya declares that "the people of Israel are God's fighting hosts on earth even as the ministering angels are His hosts in heaven"; when Judah Löew ben Bezalel declares that "Israel is the essence and goal of all creation", one might take these declarations and the ten thousand others like them in our literature, to be nothing more than decadent chauvenism unless one remembers

that the people from whose soul these sentiments arose conceived of itself as a covenanted people, as having been summoned by destiny to assume the role of religious leadership, and as having consented to bear the crushing burdens of such a leadership. For leadership is not a crown but a cross..... These sentiments were employed not to impress the Gentile world but to call forth the utmost devotion on the part of the Jew, to remind him of his calling, to challenge him to prove himself worthy of the role assigned to him by God, and to strengthen his morale whenever his ministry made him "despised and forsaken of men, a man of pains and acquainted with disease, as one from whom men hide their face."

The view opposed to the covenant-mission ideal is not unknown in Jewish history. There were many secularists in ancient Israel as there are today. Their slogan was: ~~(X) (X) (X) (X)~~ - "Let us too be like all other peoples," - the very opposite of the prophetic view: ~~(X) (X) (X) (X)~~ "It is a people that shall dwell alone and shall not be conceived of like other peoples." Israel, they maintained, was a secular people like every other people and like every other people it also had a cult and a priestly class. The protagonists of this view consequently saw no reason for resisting the ~~assimilationist~~^{we} influences of the enclaving civilizations of Canaan, Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Hellas and Rome which menaced the spiritual integrity of Israel. They did not consent to the revolutionary doctrine that God has set Israel "for a covenant of the people, for a light unto the nations, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." They refused to ascribe to Israel any unique ethico-religious mission which called for a universal apostleship. They were not conscious of any dynamic Messianism, any crusading moral purpose inherent in the culture of Israel.

Their point of view in Jewish history may be called the Sadducean,

while the opposing view which triumphed in Jewish life may be called the Pharisaic. Both the Sadducees and the Pharisees were nationalistic but the former clung to the universally accepted secular conception of nationalism while the latter clung to the radically new and distinctive prophetic concept of a holy nation. The real universalists in Israel were thus the Pharisees. When they strengthened the national life of the people and regimented it into an almost military discipline it was in order that it may be the better prepared to carry on its world mission. *istic*
Pharisaic Judaism was both national and universal. *istic* It sought to preserve both the covenant and the people of the covenant, both the soul of the race and its body.

Pharisaic Judaism turned sharply away from primitive Christianity largely because the latter, while seeking to continue, in its own way, the Messianic world-mission of Israel broke away from the tradition of national discipline and loyalty. Christianity concerned itself with the individual in relation to himself. Judaism continued to concern itself with the individual in relation to himself and to the Jewish people. Primitive Christianity yielded to the cosmopolitanism of the ancient world which Roman imperialism and the widely diffused Hellenic culture had effected, while Pharisaic Judaism adhered to the philosophy of nationalism and cultural variations which has triumphed in the modern world. Both were universalistic; but the former was diffusive in its technique while the latter was concentric. Again the Judeo-Christians were spiritually impatient and possessed of a fatuous belief in the imminence of the world's end and in the quick advent of the Kingdom. The more patient Pharisees sensed that the day had not yet come for national demobilization. They remembered the ancient admonition: "He that believeth must not be in haste..." They knew that many a hard battle for the realization of the great ideals of their faith would still have to be fought through many succeeding cycles of time and that therefore the hosts of Yahweh must not relax their discipline. History has proved them right. They read the signs of the times better than those apocalyptic dreamers who in the first few centuries of our era anticipated a cataclysmic change in the order of things and the miraculous descent of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Liberal Judaism placed itself in direct line of descent from this prophetic-Pharisaic tradition when it accepted as focal in its ideology the mission of Israel. Our modern secular illuminati who
take special

delight in making sport of this basic thought in an effort to discredit Liberal Judaism are really attacking it at its least vulnerable point. Incidentally in their cavalier treatment of this subject they are exposing their lamentable ignorance of what constituted the major tendencies in Jewish life through the ages. One would wish that some of our intelligent^sia who are now returning to the ranks of Israel, *gal. 8* having failed to establish themselves in the Gentile world, would be less addicted to intellectual swashing and [to the sport of intimidating us with slogans and patois and scientific small-change borrowed from alien cultures and foreign modes of thought and a little more given to honest research into the native qualities of Jewish life and the quite distinctive and indigenous modes of Jewish thought. We cannot be measured by the yard-stick of alien social theories. We are not comparable. We are unique. In the vocabulary of national cultures ours is an hapax legomenon This fact is the one key to an understanding of Jewish experience. To attempt to fit us into the framework of the commonly held conceptions of race and culture, to liken us to other nations, is to miss the very quintessence of Jewish culture, to overlook the essential text and thesis of our life.

Where Liberal Judaism erred was not in holding fast to the covenant and the mission ideal. It erred as the early Judeo-Christians had erred in believing that the millennial age of perfection was at hand and that there was therefore no urgent need to stress the national ideal or the importance of maintaining a strong group discipline' such as Pharisaic Judaism had built up. The glamour of the French Revolution and its apocalyptic dreams of liberty, equality and fraternity, the triumphant march of these ideals in the wake of conquering armies, the crumbling of the ghetto walls, and the first intoxication of the new enlightenment, caused our early leaders to believe that mankind was indeed on the very

threshold of the millenium. What need is there for the fences which the Rabbis had built around Jewish life when the whole world is moving towards a happy internationalism, and all nations are about to become one great, happy family? Let Israel lead the way in renouncing all national particularism and isolationism. The world will fast follow. But the world did not follow. And those Jews who were beguiled by the religious romanticism of the early reformers and shed their Jewish distinctive modes of life and thought were soon engulfed and assimilated, and Israel knew them no more.

Like the early Judeo-Christians some of the leaders of Liberal Judaism were frankly anti-nationalistic and anti-nomistic. Even those who called for the retention of a minimum of law and discipline, by the high exclusive emphasis which they placed upon the objectives of Judaism they led men to think lightly of the technique and the methods of obtaining these objectives. They spoke forcibly and eloquently and truly of the mission of Israel but they failed to evolve a modus vivendi by which the people would be constantly reminded that they are a peculiar, covenanted and consecrated people, and by means of which they would be saved from assimilation.

We find ourselves today in the same emotional environment in which the pioneers of Liberal Judaism found themselves during the aftermath of the French Revolution. The World War released vast, eschatological hopes. Wars are always the seed-beds of apocalypses. This war was to usher in universal peace, universal democracy, universal brotherhood, universal justice. All the enchanting paraphernalia of the Messianic saga were displayed. The immemorial phrases of apocalyptic times were again upon the lips of men: the old order ends; mankind will be reborn; there will be new ways among men, new ideals, a new heaven and a new earth; Christ will destroy Anti-Christ... The victories of science have

contributed in no small measure to the millenarian expectations of our day. As a result, some of our people are being stampeded into an eager and pathetic self-abdication. In this great day of Jehovah why should Israel stubbornly cling to his indurate distinctiveness. Our ideals have triumphed in the world. Many other people believe as we do. Let us then prepare to join in the one great universal church and brotherhood which are even now coming to pass.

But the patient, sober Pharisees among us, who have not forgotten the lessons of their history, will not be stampeded. They will bear in mind that many a sad cycle of frustration and defeat is yet in store for mankind before the Kingdom will be consummated. Conscious that Israel has still as great a role to play in the future as ^{it} he had in the past, they will continue to pay scrupulous heed to the discipline and the morale of the group. They will fan the flames of enthusiasm and loyalty not only for the ideals of Israel but for the people of Israel as well. They will think in terms of the people of Israel and not merely in terms of an abstract theology and a moral code. They will be reverent not only of prophecy but of the people which gave birth to prophecy and to prophets and which may yet vouchsafe many a startling revelation to mankind. They will remember the profound observation of the Rabbis: "Elijah said: Once as I was walking about a man came to me and questioned me in matters of the Law. He said: Rabbi, I have [two things in my heart and I love them both dearly, the Torah and Israel, but I do not know which of the two comes first. I said to him: Most men would say that the Torah comes first. I say unto you that the holy people Israel comes first." The modern Pharisees will proceed to enrich and beautify and vitalize Jewish group life. They will hold fast to all the agencies which in the past preserved the integrity of the people-Israel's language, Israel's lore, Israel's hope of national rehabilitation, Israel's memory-laden customs and habits of life adjusted

to modern needs.

Above all, they will proceed to re-educate the Jew. Herein Liberal Judaism has been most culpable. It has quite unconsciously but nevertheless quite effectively prepared the way for an appalling and devastating analphabetism in our ranks. Jewish learning is the rarest of phenomena among Liberal Jews. We have relegated the priceless heritage of our people - of the entire people - to the ordained and the professional few. We are thereby in danger of destroying the democratic character of our faith. If Judaism is to remain a democratic religion, if it is not to degenerate into a Rabbinic hierarchy, it must be on the basis of Jewish learning broadly disseminated through all the classes of our people. There is one inexorable law in our history. Without learning and study Judaism cannot survive. Wherever a Jewish community failed to kindle the lamp of learning and relied solely upon worship, observance and philanthropy, it ultimately disappeared.

Our modern Pharisees will also face in fair combat the secularists in our midst - our modern Sadducees. There are many groups in Israel who are the present day disciples of that ancient heresy which prophetic and Pharisaic Judaism fought doggedly through thirty centuries. Some of these secularists consent to have religion occupy a modest place in the totality of Jewish life. Others are frankly skeptical of its importance or outspokenly hostile. They have repudiated the historic religio-ethical Messianic ideal of Judaism. They are however, hard put to it to find some other satisfying life-motif to substitute for it. Some of them are driven to a pseudo-scientific race idolatry - the exaltation of race identity - a new blood cult. The newer theories of race and the findings of modern psychology are of course playing havoc with this cherished notion. Others are seeking refuge in a doctrine of cultural solidarity, extolling the ideal of the inviolability of culture identities. Israel must persist because it possesses a distinctive culture. But one wonders what the distinctiveness of Jewish culture is if it is not the dynamics of prophecy, the passionate outreaching for malchut shamayim! What other superlative contributions have we made to mankind? Whatever of the magnificent and the eternal there is in our life and literature derives from that one source. All else is a pale replica of alien thought and culture.

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Members of other cultural groups when separated from their native homes sooner or later exchange their cultures for those of other peoples. Except where territorial isolation enables expatriated peoples to retain their identity through force of social inertia, they overwhelmingly merge into their new environment. They assimilate through the processes of inter-marriage, formal re-education or new contacts. Israel has struggled desperately and sacrificially in all the lands of his dispersion, alike

in periods of persecution and of freedom, in the midst of peoples of lower culture and of higher to maintain his identity. He has refused to intermarry, a practice which would of course have destroyed him, not on the ground that the resultant racial admixture would produce less gifted musicians or scientists or writers. There was but one reason throughout the ages: "Lest he will turn away thy son from following Me, that they may serve other Gods." The Jew persisted in racial uniqueness in order to preserve the integrity of his faith. Loyalty to the faith spelled loyalty to the race. Thus when the American Jew will abandon his faith he will swiftly and surely assimilate. He will intermarry/with the peoples about him, and he will destroy himself racially, and no quantum of Jewish music and Jewish art or books on Jewish literature and philosophy will be potent enough to save him. The anti-religious Jew will be the first to go, as he always has been. The religiously indifferent Jew will linger on by sheer force of inertia until the relentless assimilative forces will scatter and overwhelm him too. The secular nationalist will endure until such times as his ideology derived from the segregated and compact Jewish community life of Eastern Europe ~~will be dissipated by the dissolving influences of American life.~~ *gal. 10* Even the strong appeal which Palestine is making today to many of our people will not prove sufficient to command their loyalty here in the days to come. The establishment of a strong Jewish Commonwealth in Palestine will not accomplish the miracle of preservation for the American Jew. The existence of a great German Fatherland has not kept the Germans in the United States from assimilating. The Jew in the United States will not long remain either a Yiddishist or a Hebraist in the technical sense in which the proponents of cultural pluralism understand the terms. Only the religious Jew who will continue steadfast in his faith will conserve and carry on the culture and the traditions of Israel. The rest will disappear, as they always have, as they inevitably must.

To sum up: Nothing has transpired in the thought of the world or in the experience of Israel to necessitate the abandonment of the native, fundamental, historic and democratic ideal of the mission of Israel. No other ideal of greater logical cogency or spiritual appeal has as yet appeared to supplant it. The chief exponent of the new doctrine of Jewish Civilization, who though himself a somewhat timid liberal, indicts Liberal Judaism on the score of this mission idea. He declares: "The Reform Movement claims that Judaism is a religious system of life, a system which God has enabled the Jew to evolve for the good of mankind. To communicate that system of life is the Jew's destiny and mission....The function of that organization is to preach the unity of God, and to further the brotherhood of man. Such a mission would pledge us to active propaganda against trinitarian Christianity and against all forms of privilege and militarism. If that were taken seriously, it would be more dangerous to be a Reform Jew than to be the most violent radical. Only a few daring spirits would venture to belong to an international organization of that kind. By setting up an impossible goal for the Jewish people, the Reform Movement has reduced Judaism to an absurdity." An absurdity?! Then the whole life of Israel has been one stupendous absurdity - its affirmations, its prophecies, its Messianic dreams, its loyalties and its sacrifices. Then the Judaism of our prophets, sages, Rabbis, philosophers and mystics, the faith of our choicest spirits has been a colossal absurdity! Their world-encompassing Messianism and their fervid apostolic vision may have been too exalted, too gigantic, too difficult, but not absurd, not absurd! Unless one chooses to place himself in line with those ancient practical civilizationists who declared: "The prophet is a fool, the man of the spirit is mad."..... But this very critic of the Jewish mission so

far forgets the logic of his position as to blazon forth on the seal of his society the very substance and summary of the mission ideal: "and nations shall follow thy light".....

The strength of Liberal Judaism has been and is its adherence to the mission ideal. Its weakness lies in the fact that it has labored under an anti-nationalistic, anti-nomistic incantation, which is fundamentally foreign to prophetic and Pharisaic Judaism. The ideal of the mission of Israel is inexplicably intertwined with the ideal of the people of Israel. Deutero-Isaiah, who of all Jews most eloquently vocalized the missionary faith of Israel was of all Jews the most nationalistic and Palestinian. It is clear, is it not, that a people need not expatriate itself or continue as an expatriated people in order to be an apostle to mankind, and that universalism and nationalism rightly conceived are never anti-thetical.

In a renewed Pharisaism lies the hope of modern Judaism. There is enough of power and beauty in the magnificent concepts of Torat Yisrael, The Faith of Israel, Am Yisrael, The People of Israel, and Eretz Yisrael, The Land of Israel, to kindle the enthusiasm of our generation. Our youth will respond to an heroic appeal. Let us offer them a transcendent, imperial and difficult ideal, yea, a dangerous ideal, an Esh Dat - a flaming faith, - and challenge them to assume the hard, exacting discipline by which alone that ideal can be approximated. The weak and timid among them will refuse. The strong and high spirited will accept the challenge and the opportunity.