



Abba Hillel Silver Collection Digitization Project

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MS-4787: Abba Hillel Silver Papers, 1902-1989.

Series V: Writings, 1909-1963, undated.

Reel
185

Box
69

Folder
932

How Judaism differed, Teaneck Forum Address, 1957.

1/ Borrowed-recast

Myth - mass - what was rejected - better
clue to an understanding of J. & J.

2/ Judge a reb. by its values at their height -

- the genesis does not explain the ultimate
product.

- Primitive cav. man does not explain

Shakespeare - Babel - Eg -

- Originality of J. - uses frontiers - do -
civilized break with past. (39)

③ True Unmother son - none in ancient world

Ikhnaton (14c BC) - worship of visible
sun disc. "Aten" - limited to family

④ No - when making a workshop of images
prohibited.

⑤ A Moral Being - source of all moral law.
"Holy" in righteousness.

No arbitrary laws - bound by their own laws
- Color - red to blue and righteousness

J. excised the wolves - the parasite, the
animal - for control, dignity - (21st)

4). Sacrifices - questioned, even condemned (2)
as an essential worship - Wherewith shall

5). Sex motif - central in ancient religions -
sexual procreation - astute - orgiastic
rites.

Laxity in sexual matters (45-7)

6). Emphasis on social justice.

Far ahead, the Codex Hammurabi (1800 BC)
no law for nobility, another - common people
- water - law - WRMS

Treatment of slaves - death

Man's heir - set him free
code, Hamm. slaves

Helps slave to escape - death

"You shall not pick up the master's
slave who has escaped" -

7). Law for care of stranger - widow - orphan
poor - to help one's enemy - no punishment

- formal provision - 2/10-2/10-6/10 -
in slaves - kind attitude - Roman world
towards poor - Yas Kwan

~~as per (57)~~

8/ Labor - disdained play. labor - had
was - (59-62)

~~Abandon~~
Exposure, Infants
Abandonment of the aged

9/ Reverence for life - in a world of cruelty
Empowerment - > 5th - end, Abraham

Humaneness (63-64)

10/ Capital Punishment - end G.

Torture - to extract confessions
1st to 3rd pbl. pbl. - 10th pbl. pbl. pbl.
could act as witness

11/ No concept (2/1/2) - Spectroscopy, [ad]

12/ Personal religion [Sp. - Event + Unhappiness]
Law, [ad] (72-76)

- 1) Critic - never reads - ²²⁰⁰~~2200~~^{only} ~~have~~ read - wonder whether I can be important. (1)
- 2) Not an evaluation - Introduction - ^{NOT Digest} Call attention - essential purposes and ideas. Each reader - according to their tastes, symp. background &
- 3) Took great pains in writing. It was 3 yrs in the writing - and of course many more years in preparation - spare hours - vacations there were parts of it which I re-wrote 6 or 8 times - ^{had to} typed and re-typed - ^{Mrs. S. Daniel-Zentgraf} ~~re-drafting~~ - re-organizing my material - preserving - deleting adding - pointing up an idea here - polishing a phrase there - checking my references - and double-checking.

There was a time in the course, its composition, when the book was twice its present size. It had to be condensed! - while at the same time retaining all that was essential to the purpose which I set for myself in writing the book.

I had to guard myself against stylistically. The written word is not like the spoken word - and the spoken word is what I was, of course, most accustomed to. To the ear - in the course of an address or sermon - the thought must be repeated for the sake of emphasis - for the listener cannot go back and re-hear what he has heard, but perhaps not fully grasped. But the eye, the reader is free to pause on a thought or a phrase not fully grasped. - In writing, therefore, I had to guard myself against repetitions and tautology.

I made a deliberate effort to make the book concise, compact but ^{not dry} unintended - not parsimonious as an author.

- 4/ At the same time - I wanted the book to be scholarly and authoritative - without being pedantic. - It was ^{not} to be a book, technical & scholarly - a graduation thesis ^{as it were} on a limited subject.
- I was working on a very large canvas - the whole range of Judaism against the vast background of the religious and ethical systems of mankind.
- ~~And~~ The reading body, I had in mind, was not exclusively the scholar, the theologian, the philosopher, religious, but the average intelligent ^{man or woman} person, who is not an expert, but who at the same time, is not altogether unfamiliar, with the subject matter under discussion.

5/ The book, therefore, I ~~believe~~ ^{am} sure, can be read by such people, without any difficulty. Occasionally one will come upon some unavoidable technical term - they are not many - and then, - comes, it is quite a simple matter to reach for the dictionary. - That's what dictionaries are for!

Every cultural discipline - music - painting - architecture - philosophy and theology - not to speak of the sciences - has its own idiom - and ~~it is~~ terminology - and certain definite ^{historical} terms must be employed.

6/ But I ^{would} suggest, that the book will yield you the most - if you not only read it, but study it. It need not be read in one sitting ^{or two sittings}. It is not a novel! Some chapters I will bear re-reading, especially where the ground is not entirely familiar to you.

Where find ^{all} 6

1) Completing - many countries - peoples - racess.
Observed their ways of life - esp their rel. doctrines
customs - rituals - temples and shrines.

As you circumnavigate the globe - you touch
all the great religions of mankind and you are
able to see in what manner, and to what degree
they have enriched the culture and civilization
of the peoples of the world.

At times you are struck by their similarities
at other times by their contrasts.

Symbols and ceremonies which you associated to
be unique to your own religion - you are
surprised to find also with slight variations
in other religions.

In Buddhist pagoda - in Hindu Temple - in
Shinto Shrine or in Moslem mosque - you
discover striking similarities with church
and synagogue - and, of course, also striking differences.
Their modes of worship differ - but every where there
is worship. Prayer - hallowed ground
where men come, to rest, to pray, to be
known - and, the agencies, their lives -
art of reverence for the dead - to seeking
protection from evil, hope and reassurance.

4 One acquires a deeper reverence for all faiths, ^{where we are} ⁽²⁾
regardless of their strange accoutrements, as one
comes to see their common purpose and their
profound motivations.

One comes to think less of competition & assaults, and
more of their underlying unity - even ~~though~~ ^{though} one re-
mains aware of their qualitative differences.

→ These differences are ^{however} important - They have fashioned
distinctive civilizations - and determined ~~the~~ a
definite course of history.

All rivers run to the sea, ^{it is true} but their channels
and their courses differ widely.

Each faith has its own perspectives, and each
system of thought its own texture and pattern.

To ignore these differences is to overlook the deep
changes which existed in the past, and to assume
an ~~identical~~ ^{assumed} ~~it~~ doctrine and outlook which do
not exist in the present.

An attempt to gloss over these differences as a
gesture of good will would be a superficial act,
serving neither the purposes of scholarship - nor the
realities of the situation.

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.

There are great areas of common interest in which
all religions can cooperate - in mutual helpfulness and
respect, influencing one another and learning from one another.

3/ I have been invited to speak to you on the subject!³
"When I was in D. Ford?" - It is the theme of my recent
book - and may this serve as a commercial!

4/ I was not just another religion in the ancient world.
which has ^{survived} to the present time.

It was a challenging and revolutionary religion whose
distinctiveness, as well as its importance & importance,
lay in its decisive break with the conventional past
which all the other religions failed to make.

Its originality is to be found in the new frontiers
which it reached and crossed.

Its founders were keenly aware that what they
were bringing to mankind was something radically
different and new.

5/ They were bringing order, clarity and coherence to the
spiritual life of man, by banishing the moral chaos
of the mythological complex which held the minds of
men enthralled.

They were bringing moral freedom to men by ^{rejecting} ~~reproducing~~
the notions of fate - and determinism which oppressed
them.

They taught men a new conception of God, a new
sacred sensitiveness as to what was right and
wrong - a new awareness of a man's duties toward
his fellow-men - a new spiritual refinement
and delicacy in the relationship between the
sexes.

14
they carried on a relentless opposition to the
superstition & ritualism in the worship of God.

- through their labors - J. became a religious move-
ment of purification and spiritualization, achieving
for the religious life, man, what three centuries
later achieved for his artistic and intellectual life -
a sobriety & measure and order which we are
wont to call "classicism"

6/ And they succeeded in giving their people a bind-
ing sense of covenant and mission - to be the
stewards of these ideals in the world - and to pro-
pagate them among the world. For
these new religious insights were not meant for Israel
alone but for all mankind.

Israel's covenant with God - was also a covenant
with mankind - "a covenant to the peoples - a
light to the nations"

The predominant hope of the people of Israel
was not to convert the whole world to Judaism, but
to God!

It looked forward to the day - not of one Univer-
sal church to which all true believers would be-
long - but to the day when God would be one - and
his name would be one.

7/ Specifically - what was this challenging and
difficult faith? - which in later times gave

→ J. does not attempt to answer unanswerable questions or to give man what man cannot have.

It offers no unique "knowledge" or sacred "gospels" - and no tidings of a miraculous scheme of salvation or resurrection.

- It is in essence a religion of few substitutes. It is a religious humanism - a devout morality.

= It is Torah = "teaching" - a compendium of moral instructions, a rule of life for men and nations - a pattern of behavior - a "way" which if faithfully followed, leads to the well-being of the individual and society.

8.) ~~And~~ Judaism's "way" is designed to sustain and - advance life, not to escape or transcend it.

Its roots are set deep in the practical needs of man, and it is fully responsive both to his instincts and his aspirations.

It does not attempt to alter human nature or to suppress human instincts. Its aim is to guide them.

It is deeply receptive of man's capacities but also of his limitations.

The Torah was not given to "wise men" but to mortal, fallible men.

9.) The Founders of Judaism - rejected all mythological concepts & deity - which were common to all

- the religions of the ancient world. (6)
- all the gods of the ancient world of lesser or higher degree, had their genealogies, their births, families, rivalries, love affairs - and they were all subject to some power beyond themselves - nature - fate - necessity - destiny.
 - They were personifications of forces in nature.
 - The God of Israel was alone, in being alone, with no power above him.
 - He was the creator of the forces of nature - not their personification.
 - The religions of the ancient world looked upon all phenomena of nature as presences of sacred life and will. Nothing was inanimate.
 - Early man confronted his world not as "It" but as "Thou". Judaism taught mankind to see the "Thou" only in God.

- 10). Judaism proclaimed an uncompromising monotheism.
- "God is one and alone".
 - Judaism did not fuse with other faiths.
 - It did not incorporate indigenous gods.
 - There are ~~no~~ other gods but ~~2/21~~
 - What was unique about the God of Judaism was precisely that he was not a national god. But the Universal God - who had chosen

the people / hard to proclaim His unity (b)
and universality.

- This was the great continental divide between
Judaism and all other religions.

- They and the prohibition of idolatry! and the
Gods of the ancients were represented in images -
either as animals - as in the case of the gods of
Egypt - or in human form, accompanied by sacred
animals or creatures, as in the case of the
gods of the Near East and the Greek and Roman
pantheons

- this worship of gods through images led to the
obscuring of the spiritual nature of the deity even
when it did not lead to gross and repulsive
ritual practices - Shed 1st

- this meant, of course, that all the shrines and
temples, the ancient world ^{the gods & their rituals} were an abomination
to him -

H). this one, spiritual God - because He was not an
unpredictable force / nature - was holy not in,
the commonly accepted sense of awe, reverence
and remoteness - but in a new sense, moral
perfection. "The holy God shows Himself
holy through righteousness" (Lk).

there is no anthropomorphism or caricatures in Him

such as characterizes the conduct, the mythological
deities.

- He is a god, Cadiz - restful and defensible justice

- All his ways are Cadiz - even - at times - unfathomable

- the judge the world with Cadiz

- And so this worshipper is summoned to seek Cadiz.

- And to worship him - not so much with sacrifice

but with deeds, Cadiz - Highest code of personal and social morality

- Judeans removed the willful, the erratic and the

animal from the concept, divinity.

12. And the sex motif - which is so central in mythology

- and which ~~is~~ expressed deep in the instincts of
man fructification - and in many organic rites
connected with water festivals.

- Judeans called these practices and their sex significance
obscure.

Exigency in sexual matters - which characterized so
many of the people, Antiquity. and which was sanctioned
by the examples their gods - even execrated by Judeans
in an unparalleled way

Purity of family life - to a degree practically unknown
in the ancient world - became the norm for the Jewish
way of life - and it remained a characteristic of Jewish
behavior throughout the ages.

"Sanctify yourself even in things permitted to you"
- ~~was~~ have a guiding principle.

13/ This new approach to Religion, as devout morality, enabled J. to develop a new ethical outlook for mankind.

— Man was exalted. Labour was exalted. The rights of the widow and the orphan, as a child of God, were established. His discrimination is recognized in Hebrew law that a noble and a commoner — as is the case in the older Hammurabi code — for example — or but the native born and the stranger.

— A more humane treatment, the slave is protected. He who causes injury to a slave must set him free and he who kills his slave must be subject to the death penalty.

— Special care must be taken, the widow and the orphan and the poor. The poor in the ancient world were held in contempt. "What is the use of being kind to a poor man?" wrote Cicero.

— In Judaism the poor and needy were the special wards of God — and the special responsibility of those who would truly worship God.

— Judaism denounced the oppression and exploitation. The fact is no religion did before or since and no community in history organized itself so early to provide relief for the needy as the Jewish community.

14/ Physical labor was despised in ancient world (as Aristotle was, the opinion that laborers, artisans, and even merchants were unfit for the exercise of virtue, and for citizenship)

The Bible regards a man for himself who is privileged to eat, the fruit, the labor, his own hands

15/ The new reverence for human life which Judaism introduced, is again in evidence in its opposition to the abandonment, the aged and the exposure of infants, practices which were very common in the ancient world. Plato approved of infanticide.

In Israel old age was revered - and the law forbade the murder or exposure of unwanted infants.

Judaism's universal rule of kindness, extended also to animals: "Until the 19c, cruelty to animals was nowhere illegal, except in J. Law"

14/ Judaism was the first religion to give mankind the vision of the humanity - the brotherhood - and of universal peace.

15/ Quote p-74

1. I spoke of Jud. as a religious humanism.

The accent in J. is never on abstract speculation but on an ethical message and program.

Basic theologic problems ^{do} ~~are~~ J.-course receive various degrees of attention in Biblical and Rabbinic literature - but the strong emphasis is always on moral conduct.

עבודה (Avodah) means the true worship, God, not an intellectual fathoming of His nature.

The beginning of wisdom is reverence for God. And reverence for God is made manifest through moral action. "He judged the poor and needy, then it was well. Is not this to know us? Say, the Lord!"

2. As a religious humanism (Jud.) is characterized by a temperate quality - a whole-some, even and avoidance of all extremes.

There are those who have a liking for religion with a chairy shirt - for hallowing with harrowing.

They will not find it in Judaism.

Judaism is a liveable faith not too difficult for man or beyond his reach.

It does not demand the impossible May.

עבודה (Avodah) is (It) is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.

3/ Jud. had faith in human perfectibility but (2)
it took a reasoned and long-range view of it.
Human perfection is a goal, not a present reality.
Jud. outlined a founded regimen of moral tests
and duties, a deliberate course of training, to
achieve the goal.
Excess - is not the opposite of such a course
of training - but its corruption.
We do not climb a ladder, by starting at the top.

4/ Judaimi requirements are not excessive.
It does not regard extremes in practicing with favor.
"Be not righteous over-much" (Eccl. 10:1)
@ Eccl 3:10 - "a prison first brings destruction
upon the holder."

Jud. was suspicious of all that was over-sharpened
and exaggerated in the revelations of Sp. that
and conduct.

It was instructed mystic inebriation, hysterical
religiosity - a delirium of piety.

5/ No one was called upon to be altruistic
to the extent of devoting all his possessions to
God "a man should give of all that he has -
not all that he has."

6/ A man should avoid all excess in
self-indulgence - but no one should



deny himself the big, hearty joys of life. (3)

Judaism. While some of the great religious
7 monarchs - Hindus - Buddhists - Christians
never stressed the asceticism and sparsity of life -
never advocated asceticism - never built
monasteries and universities (except in the one
instance of Jumran) - never advocated self-
mortification as a means of deliverance and
salvation.

Even the popular religions of Greece, and of the ancient
Mediterranean world - ~~as well as the widely~~
accepted philosophies ~~from 6th c. B.C. to the~~
~~end of pagan days in 4th c. C.E.~~ - taught con-
tempt for the human body - included many
ascetic practices - concerned largely with
neither - world & the hereafter - with ancient
guilt and expiation.

In the first 3 centuries, the C.E., asceticism belonged
to the thought and practices of many early
philosophic schools
Christianity in its early centuries, was overwhelmingly
ascetic in character. It extolled poverty
and celibacy. Even marriage was disparaged
7 in the early church.

at best marriage was tolerated as a concession to human frailty - In J. to many ^{a divorced cry} ~~obedient~~ children J's faith is suffused with optimism which derived not from extended restr. prosperity or prolonged security - but from a rejection of dualism and an unshaken faith in a Guardian God of justice and process.

His mood was not that of quiet-haunted men, obsessed with a conviction of sin - awaiting divine judgment when their probationary days on this transitory earth would be ended.

Quote Mainwicks p. 214

6/ Judaism recognized, of course, the existence of pain and suffering in life - and what a role it can play in the unfolding of character.

It can at times be made a humane discipline

and a source of increased power.

It should be accepted without resentment, illness or rebellion.

CAPTAIN JOSEPH D. COX, COMMANDING

MR. & MRS. ABRA HILLET-SILVER

On Board S. S. President Wilson

But it should not be sought out as something

AMERICAN PRESIDENT LINES

desirable. It is not a unif. in itself.

It is not the key to the mystery of life

To count poverty and persecutions frequently ⁽⁵⁾
the sign of a nervous. They are not a
merely private for greatness.

- For many people suffering is a shattering and
undermining experience.
- Poverty in itself is not a virtue, nor is wealth
in itself an evil. - their abuse -
- Poverty as a social evil must be eradicated
- this is the prophetic summons of Judaism.
- No great civilization has ever been reared
on the foundations of poverty and want.
- Rab - leading audience - "A man, with some
day have to give an account to God
for all the good things which his eyes
beheld and which he refused to partake."

7/ Jud. preached social justice but not conservatism.
It ~~taught~~ advocated Peace but not pacifism.
It did not teach men not to resist evil or
the one who is evil.

Non-resistance has a long history - ante-
dating the teachings of Jesus.
It had its verbal and full expressions in

India and China - and in early Greek
schools of philosophy

In Jesus' mystical outlook, the world was fast
coming to an end and there was no point in re-
sisting evil.

Judaism rejected all doctrines of universal love
and all forms of pacifism - though it was first
to urge disarmament - 1901 -

Men must work, toil and, if necessary,
fight for the good society

"Thou shalt eradicate the evil from your
midst."

We must never resign ourselves to evil
or injustice or oppression - God, in his own way,
will take care of it

Answer - "Hate evil, love the good, and establish

justice in the world. Tyrants and oppressors

must be fought. Insurrection and revolution

against tyranny are, under certain conditions, not only

permitted but mandatory.

It is one thing to be suffering and grieving; it is
another to submit to evil, and, finally, -
to turn the other cheek to the smiter.

Judaism hated war - and the shedding of blood
- Israel's hope for the future was bound up with
the hope of universal disarmament - with an
international society based in brotherhood -
Such a society is possible - but it will not
come to pass through abdication, inaction,
resignation or despair.

87. Death overshadows the thought of nearly all
the religions of mankind.

Judaism alone was preoccupied with life - with
man's life - here upon earth - the Torah is a

ענין חיים

The Torah shows us interest in the career of the
soul after death.

The supreme principle, the faithful was "to walk be-
fore God and to see the goodness of God in the land
[the living]" (Ps 116).

Judaism made a determined effort to direct the
attention of men away from the realm of the dead.
to the faithful observance of God's statutes and
ordinances all the days that you live
upon the earth?

The Rabbis advised men not to speculate too
much about the future life.

- No prayers for the dead are ordained in the Bible - (8)
- No sacrifices to the dead - no ancestor worship.
- No where in the Bible is there the promise of reward and punishment in a future life - or of a judgment after death, or any information about Heaven or Purgatory or Hell.
- In Judaism, the Bible does not rest upon the dogmas of resurrection or immortality. They are not they ideas with the Hebrew prophets - though an occasional late reference to resurrection may be found in Scriptures.
- For a 1000 years, throughout Judaism's greatest creative period, these beliefs were not regarded as essential doctrines.
- This is especially significant when one recalls that belief in resurrection and immortality, in one form or another, were well nigh universal in the ancient world.
- Apparently - the uncompromising monotheism of Judaism, could not be reconciled, with resurrection which was everywhere tangled up with ancestor-worship, and with immortality - which in many words, endowed the human soul with some form of divine status. To ascribe immortality to the soul meant exchanging divinity for it.

Such a notion was intolerable to Judaism. (9)

- Towards the beginning of the common era - when the dangers to monotheism or the fear of a relapse into idolatry had diminished - the Pharisaic leaders of Judaism became less inhospitable to their pagan neighbors - and the doctrines of resurrection and immortality were brought into the framework of orthodox Judaism.

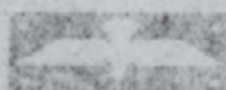
It is noteworthy, however, that centuries later, orthodox Jewish philosophers, like Hasdai Crescas (1340) and his pupil Joseph Albo, still refused to include resurrection among the basic principles of Judaism, but regarded it only as a secondary, derivative belief accepted by the nation.

Albo is correct in drawing attention to the relative unimportance which the doctrine of resurrection has for Christianity, in contrast to Judaism.

With Christianity it is the very essence - the chief corner-stone, the entire edifice, the faith. Paul makes that point vanishingly clear. "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain" (I Cor. 15).

9/ [Juste page 255]

(10)



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1/ Why? (a) 40 yrs. -

Summarize - (b) Suppose - what is - distinctive - (not in extended)
pressure and blandishments - Not my answer - Fairly,
forthrightly - without complications and without apologies -

Differed not alone from existing religions - all classes - from
mythol. systems ^{mysteries} and most advanced ethical systems
of ancient world -

For Jud. was a revolutionary difference - Original in its fundamental
concepts - Reached and passed new frontiers - (38-39)

Jews never isolated too culturally - Very receptive - borrowed
copiously - But had its definite limits! - (38-39)

2/ Ancient Myth. religions - explain "Creation" - primitive "Being"
story of "nature" forces - genealogies - fairies - rivalries -
their worship - so rituals of magic and fertility cults
to orgiastic - to influence the processes Nature

3. Gave Mankind not a phil. of Being - but a phil. of History -
- not the history of God - but the unfolding of this
ethical will in the lives of Men and Nations - the
articulation in terms of an immanent Divine Plan
no ritual or J. "symbolizes" anything about the nature of God
or His history.

all ritual is didactic in purpose - reminding men of their
obligations toward God and their fellow-men.

The concept of God as Creator came to be subordinated
to God of History - Prophets - wise men of their
natural destiny - (12-)

Self-justifying protest - hermits - (195) (220) (3)

(c) Original Sin - Adam's sin transmitted to all his
descendants - Man incapable of ~~his~~ achieving his own
~~reformations~~ development and improvement

~~(167) (172)~~

Existentialism (178 - 180)

(d) Extremes - Peace - Pacifism, Justice - Communism;

6) Differences and Underlying Unity (288).



- Preface

1/ My object was to write a book, scholarly but not pedantic
for the average intelligent ^{reader} man a human, ~~who is not a~~
~~expert, but is not altogether unfamiliar with the subject~~
~~with the subject~~

2/ Suppose such a reader, Jew or non-Jew, would ask himself

What is this religion called Judaism?

What is there distinctive or original about it?

~~How has it differed from other~~
How has it differed - and how does it differ ^{in any} from other

religion of mankind?

Why has the Jew persisted in his loyalty to that

religion for so many centuries, in spite of the
persecutions ^{which were put} upon him to abandon it?

3/ What would the answer be? (I try to give the answer
in my book - "Where Judaism Differed" - fairly -

but not brightly - without apologies but I hope
and without undue partiality)

4/ I ~~also~~ draw attention to the revolutionary ideas which
Judaism contributed to the S.P. and Ethical Age of mankind -
and its refusal to accommodate itself not alone to the
mythological concepts of the ancient world, but even to its

most advanced ethical systems - but also to use that (2)
is propounded in ~~the~~ ~~past~~ history ^{such} as
Kiddushin, thus hardly a Islam.

5/ I stress that the essential quality of Judaism
is a devout ^{- centered in unity - freedom and responsibility} ~~Humanism~~ ^{ideal} ~~predominant interest~~
^{in the world} ~~its emphasis on conduct~~ - and ^{in the building}
of the good society on earth.

6/ I call attention to the ~~reasonable~~ ^{demands} ~~which~~ ^{it in part}
makes upon ~~man~~ ^{to follow} - ~~It~~ ^{It} ~~disrupts~~ ^{even} ~~all~~ ^{extremes} ~~It~~
~~disrupts~~ ^{It} ~~all~~ ^{sharp} ~~alternatives~~ ^{alternatives} ~~It~~ ^{It} ~~aims~~
~~to~~ ^{to} ~~maintain~~ ^{to} ~~and~~ ^{advance} ~~human life~~ - not to
escape or transcend it.

7/ ~~It~~ ^{It} ~~teaches~~ ^{urges} ~~man~~ ^{man} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~enjoy~~ ^{enjoy} ~~life~~ ^{life} ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ ~~all~~ ^{all} ~~ways~~ ^{ways} ~~which~~
~~do~~ ^{do} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~transgress~~ ^{transgress} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~moral~~ ^{moral} ~~law~~ ^{law} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~which~~ ^{which} ~~do~~ ^{do} ~~not~~ ^{not}
~~impair~~ ^{impair} ~~his~~ ^{his} ~~spiritual~~ ^{spiritual} ~~growth~~ ^{growth}.

8/ I hope that I have succeeded, if only in part:
in presenting the ~~disturbance~~ ^{message} ~~which~~ ^{for nearly 3000 years}
has ~~permeated~~ ^{permeated} ~~the~~ ^{the} ~~spirit~~ ^{spirit} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~man~~ ^{man} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~new~~ ^{new} ~~adventures~~ ^{adventures}
in faith and social organization

9/ Just (28)

Sin and Redemption

R. Abta Halevi

In my book, "Where Judaism Differed", I endeavor^{ed} to define Judaism's traditional attitude towards sin and redemption.

I stated that Judaism is not constructed around any drama of redemption. There is no term in the Hebrew language for "salvation" in a sacramental, redemptive sense. The Bible knows of no such concept as "redemption from sin".

The central message of the Gospel deals with sin, grace, forgiveness and justification. The central message of Judaism deals with doing justly, loving mercy and walking in probity with God. Judaism's primary concern was to teach men not how sin came into the world, but how to avoid sin and how to repent of sin once having succumbed to it. All men are capable of sinning because all men are endowed with free will. Judaism has much to say on the subject of sin^{and its consequences} but little on ~~the~~ non-moral concept of Original Sin which is a of mythological origin.

Judaism did not caricature life into something ~~banal~~, fallen and tragic, in order to make room for some miraculous redemption. Judaism^{of} rejected the dogma which^{in our day} has been re-formulated by ~~modern~~ theological existentialists that man is helpless to save himself, that his efforts at social and ethical improvement will not bring the Kingdom of God any nearer, and that the very thought of man cooperating in the establishment of the good society is presumptuous and ~~is~~ but another evidence of man's besetting sin of pride. Judaism never confronted man with the fact of ^{his} total and irrevocable depravity. If man sinned, he may repent and be forgiven.

The initiative, however, must come from man, not from God. God's love will meet man more than half way, or to use the superb imagery of Judah Halevi,

"When I go forth to seek Thee, I find Thee seeking me". The Psalmist, too, finds that "God is near unto all who call upon Him, who call upon Him in truth". But the call must ^{first} come from man, "Return to Me and I will return to you" says the Lord of Hosts."

That is why Teshubah -- repentance, not redemption -- holds such a prominent place in Jewish religious thought. In Greek philosophy, repentance is not held up as a virtue. In Judaism it is among the highest of virtues. No other religious literature is so eloquent on the subject of the nobility and efficacy of repentance. "In the place where the repentant sinner stands, even the righteous ^{man} who has never sinned cannot stand." The recurrent theme in our devotional literature is sin and repentance, ~~rather~~ ^{not} crime and punishment.

Repentance is not something mysterious. ^{man is not asked} ~~It does not call for any~~ transformation in the individual, as if through some sacramental act he ^{to be} were "born anew", ^{to} putting off his old nature and putting on a new nature. The way of repentance is fully defined in Judaism. There must be acts of restitution and reparation wherever possible. There must be sincere confession, not to man, but to oneself and to God. There must be a firm resolve not to sin again.

There is evil in the life of man and in society but they can be overcome by moral effort and exertion to a degree where man's life on earth may yield him a large measure of happiness and satisfaction.

During the Awesome Days, we are summoned to repent, to confront ourselves and our God. "Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." We are admonished to judge our life and our actions in the clear, searching light of relentless ~~truth~~ ^{self-examination}.

We are asked to do this not that we might be humbled or abased.

The aim of our religion is to inspire ^{us} ~~man to excel himself~~, never to discourage or disparage ^{us} ~~him~~. Sin is basically the voluntary abandonment of status, self-degradation, descent to levels ^{which are} unworthy of man. Judaism challenges ^{us} ~~the sinner~~ to return to ^{an} ~~his~~ high, human status, to live and act as if ^{our lives} ~~life~~ were tremendously significant, ^{and to try to excel ourselves} ~~and nobly ascendant~~.

^{To do this} But we must be frank with ourselves and, from time to time, ^{we must submit} ~~set~~ ^{to a} ~~ourselves up for~~ thorough-going self-appraisal, or we shall never advance spiritually. We never really come to know ourselves until we have thrust aside the heavy curtains of self-deception, self-exculpation and self-approbation, with which we so often enfold our lives.

It is not easy to judge ourselves honestly. Too many things stand in the way. In the first place, there are the deep grooves of the past. What we have been doing, customarily, seems right and proper in our eyes. Then there is self-esteem, the desire of man to think well of himself. We do not like to disapprove of ourselves. To acknowledge that we have been wrong seems like indicting ourselves. Man is very near to himself, and is his own best advocate. ~~As a rule, he~~ is inclined to act, where he himself is involved, not as prosecutor or judge, but as counsel for the defense. It is easier to judge others than ourselves. But that is precisely what our religion asks us not to do.

We are asked not to judge other men at all or concern ourselves with their opinions ^{about us} ~~and judgments~~, or with the standards and reactions of the social group of which we are a part. In a very direct and personal way, we are summoned to think of ourselves in relation to ourselves, to our own immortal souls, to our mission in life and to our destiny on earth.

One of the difficulties in the way of self-examination is that every man lives on several levels and in a ^{number} ~~series~~ of separate compartments. We are not always the same on all levels and in all compartments. When we take stock of ourselves, it is usually ~~in relation~~ to our most favored and creditable ^{position} ~~location~~ that we direct our attention, where we are at our best, ~~estate~~. We look in upon ourselves only where we are most presentable and least vulnerable, where we know ourselves to be least open to ~~self~~-criticism. Other areas of our lives we choose to by-pass. But it is these very dark and un-aided compartments of our lives which need to be unlocked, if they are to be made clean and fresh. We all have ~~our~~ blind spots -- ~~principally~~ for things which we do not wish to see. We are thus ~~partially blind~~. Only by a determined act of spiritual introspection can we correct ~~that~~ ^{our} imperfect vision so that where there was darkness there may be light.

Our religion wants ^{us} ~~men~~ to be whole -- Tamim -- single-hearted. It wants us to be one and the same on all levels of existence, in all our manifold relationships with our fellow-men and with ourselves. Our religion claims nothing less than the whole domain of our being. It will not be satisfied with ^{there} a part of us.

There are some people who are very loving and devoted to their families and on that level of existence they are truly exemplary. But the same people may be ruthless in their business life, conscienceless towards competitors, hard and thoughtless towards employees and co-workers, indifferent to the needs of others, and altogether un-interested in the progress of their community, or in the larger life of their country or

humanity. Conversely, there are those who are, or at least appear to be, paragons of social-mindedness, affable, courteous and cooperative in the world outside, but within the private precincts of their own homes they show neither love nor thoughtfulness nor any understanding of what it takes to build a home and maintain it in dignity and beauty. The very same man may be a totally different person in different situations. Such a man is unpredictable, contradictory and, therefore, undependable. He is a bag-full of pieces which have not been put together in any solid pattern.

It is true, of course, that every human being is an intricate network and very much involved. Complete unity and clean simplicity in one's own life, and unfailing consistency in conduct, are difficult to achieve. That would be perfection, and perfection belongs only to God. Our religion expects of us not to be perfect, but to be ~~properly~~ ^{towards} motivated ^{perfection}. "Man is wise only", declared the famous poet, Ibn Gabirol, "while in search of wisdom; when he imagines that he has attained it -- he is a fool".

~~One of the legends of our people has it that~~ ^{TP} Tineius Rufus, the Roman governor of Judea, who crushed the Bar Kochba revolution, once asked ~~the great~~ Rabbi Akiba, who was the spiritual father of ~~the~~ revolution; "If your God is so great, why did He not create man as perfect as He wanted him to be?" Akiba replied: "For the very reasons that man's supreme opportunity in life and the very reason for his existence, is to perfect himself". If we strive for wholeness and integrity, for what we might call organic moral unity, we are sure to win ~~also~~ a large measure of simplicity, coordination and harmony. Our lives will then come to have a clear pattern, a firm texture and a standard quality.

In unifying our lives, in trying to achieve identity on all levels of existence, we must guard ourselves against the facile assumption that if we are a great success in one or another department of life, everything else does not matter. But everything else does matter greatly! Success in one field does not cover up or atone for moral failure in other fields. A man cannot say: "I am a very successful merchant or industrialist, or a great scientist or inventor, or a world-renowned artist, actor or sportsman, and therefore I can afford to be indifferent to the moral standards and disciplines and the ethical demands of society. Our religion recognizes no such special pleading and no ~~such~~ exempted classes, ~~of~~ people. On the contrary, the more successful and outstanding ^{an} ~~the~~ individual is, the more is demanded of him, for he has been endowed with greater power, and power is a responsibility as ^{well as} ~~great as it is~~ a privilege.

Sometimes a nation ^{comes} ~~begins~~ to pride itself upon its material prosperity, ~~its~~ its outstanding success in production, trade and agriculture ~~its~~ its teeming cities, ^{and} its vast wealth, and there are citizens who assume that that is all that matters. Slums ^{do not} ~~don't~~ matter, ^{or} ~~and~~ juvenile delinquency, ^{or} ~~or~~ and a mounting divorce rate, ^{or} ~~and~~ loose morals ^{or} ~~and~~ intolerance ^{or} ~~and~~ educational standards, ~~which are not geared to the new age.~~ But ^{all these} ~~they~~ do urgently matter, and most vitally. If un-checked or un-corrected, they may topple the whole edifice of success upon which these citizens rely, ^{so fatuously} ~~so much.~~ ^{hational} ~~Confidence based~~ ^{when it is} ~~on success rests on shifting sands.~~ ^{power and} When based on character, it ^{is set upon} ~~rests on~~ solid rock.

As a nation we have many blind spots. We simply will not see ^{the evils} ~~them~~ as evils, as symptoms of disease. The courseness, violence and brutality

which are daily served up to our people, young and old, as entertainment,
the sex obsessions of our modern writers and novelists and the readers who
make of their books best-sellers, ~~all this is not culture, art, or the~~ ^{we choose to regard as} ~~new creative expressions of an advancing civilization.~~ ^{B.A.} They are corruption
and decadence. ^{and little else.}

In spiritual matters ^{we} ~~one~~ must not reason from material strength and
power, but from an humble acknowledgment of inadequacy. "We have sinned!
We have transgressed! We have done perversely!" We must do better! ~~This~~ ^{in outer space}
is true also of nations. To outstrip and outdistance one another is not
important, but to acknowledge ^{but} ~~the~~ mistakes of the past, and in a new spirit
to seek ways of cooperation, which will benefit not mine, ^{only} ~~or thine,~~ but us,
all people and all mankind -- that is all-important -- ~~that is total and~~
organic success.

That is why the note of confession, contrition and repentance is
so often heard in the prayers of this season. To make a new beginning one
must be very humble. In the long run, it is the very humble who inherit
the earth.

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