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# JUDAISM

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# JUDAISM: THE ELEMENTS

LEON ROTH

## I

There have been many attempts at a pocket definition of Judaism. There is Hillel's, in reply to a would-be convert's request to be taught Judaism while he stood on one leg: "What you do not like yourself, do not do to others." There is the medieval Rabbi's (in the words of the Psalmist): "In all thy ways know God." There is the prophet Jonah's: "I am a Hebrew and I reverence the God of Heaven who made the sea and the dry land." A famous one is that of Micah: "He hath told thee, O man, what is good; and what doth God require of thee but to do justice and to love mercy and to walk humbly with thy God." What is common to all these summary statements is that they are couched in terms of general moral values. Like Micah's pronouncement, they are concerned with no one person or group of persons but with man.

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*A brief, persuasively articulated view of the basic elements of Judaism, as seen from a traditionalist vantage point, has long been a desideratum. The former Professor of Jewish Philosophy at the Hebrew University, and the author of a long series of books and essays on Jewish philosophy and ethics, offers such credo in the present essay. Currently, Dr. Leon Roth is Visiting Professor of Jewish Philosophy at the College of Jewish Studies of Chicago.*

The content of Judaism would thus seem to be universal, yet its bearers are a particular people, the Jews; and the history of Judaism is the story of the balance (often an uneasy one) between the universality of the doctrine and the particularity of its transmitters. The connexion between the two is laid down clearly from the very first. God is represented as having "known" Abraham (that is, singled him out from all others) in order that he should command his children and his household after him to practice the "way of God, that is, to do justice and judgment." Here, too, the terms used are completely general: justice, judgment, the way of God; and the children of Abraham are to be the vehicle through which the way of God (that is, the way of justice and judgment) is to be displayed.

This is the doctrine of the "chosen people," a doctrine which has been misunderstood by both Jews and non-Jews, and which has done much harm. It is so easy to claim to be the chosen people, and to forget that the choice means duty, not privilege. In itself no one people is any better, as in itself no one people is any worse, than any other. But the Jews were chosen to be a "holy" nation, that is, a nation set apart in order to exemplify a way of living which is right and good for all.

We are discussing the theory of the matter; and it is no argument to say that the Jews we know (and are) are

far from being a pattern people. Perhaps they are and perhaps they are not. The point is that Judaism is not to be considered in terms of the Jews but the Jews in terms of Judaism.

This is shown by a fact of some practical importance. When we say that the Jewish people is in idea the bearer or carrier or transmitter of Judaism, the phrase "Jewish people" has to be understood very carefully and in the widest sense. In principle, the tie constituting this people is not one of "race" or "blood." Judaism does not seek converts, and indeed since Talmudic times has actively discouraged them. But a convert once accepted is a full member of the community of Judaism whatever his "blood" may be. Some of the greatest Jews of history (e.g. the patriot and scholar-saint Akiba) are reported to have been converts or the descendants of converts. "Let not thy descent be light in thine eyes," wrote Maimonides to a convert of his day. "If *our* descent is from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, thine is from *God Himself*."

Thus, the root loyalty of Judaism is not to a person or to an aggregate of persons but, like the root loyalty of Buddhism, to a Teaching. This Teaching (in Hebrew, *Torah*) is the 'Law of Moses' as it has been lived and interpreted, with ever-changing emphasis and modification, during the many long centuries of its history. The length of this history should not pass unremarked. The traditional date of the founding father of Judaism, the patriarch Abraham, is roughly the same number of years *before* the Christian era as we are now (1957) *after* it. The traditional date of Moses is some four centuries later (say, 1500 B.C.); that of David and Solomon (1,000 B.C.), five centuries

later still. The great literary prophets (Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) range onwards from the eighth century B.C. The books classified as the Apocrypha are from Hellenistic times (3rd-1st century B.C.); and it is to the latter half of this period that most of the contents of the newly discovered Dead Sea Scrolls should apparently be ascribed. The Mishnah, the basic Rabbinic collection of traditional law, is of the 2nd and 3rd centuries of the Christian era, the Talmud, in its two recensions, of the 4th-6th. The standard Codes, based on the further discussions of the schools and the decisions of the courts, belong to the 11th-16th centuries, and they are contemporary with the work of the systematic theologians, moralists and philosophers; while the mystical movements, with their puzzled doctrine and their often disastrous practical outbursts and consequences, are a sporadic accompaniment to the whole.

This is all Torah, all—by conscious fiction—the 'Law of Moses'; and we may consider for a moment the treatment of Moses in Jewish tradition since it offers a key to much, which to our generation, is unfamiliar.

We are accustomed to think of Moses as the lawgiver; and we have been taught to contrast the "spirit" of prophecy with the "letter" of law as if legal rigorism had to be swept away by prophetic "inwardness" before religion could be born. That is not so in the history of Judaism, and that for the reason that in Judaism these factors were never dissociated.

Judaism knows Moses not as a lawgiver but as prophet (which means a spokesman of God, not a soothsayer), indeed, as the greatest of the prophets; and "his" law is not his at all: it is

God's. The law is the detail of the "way of God," and Moses is only its announcer and expounder. Moses' own exposition is given traditionally in the Book of Deuteronomy; and it is just in the humane legislation of this book that we find the highest combination of "inner" and "outer," spirit and discipline. For the traditional Moses there is no opposition between law and feeling, between love and reverence and command. It is "Moses the man of God" in whose mouth the Bible puts the noble prayer beginning "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations" and ending "Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us;" and it is Moses, the Moses of Deuteronomy, who knows that the Commandment is not something far off and distant from man, but "very near," in our very "mouths and hearts."

Yet in the tradition, Moses, as an individual, disappears. He never became, as did the Buddha, the centre of a cult. "No one knows his burial place to this day." In common Hebrew parlance he is known as Moses *our Teacher*, while the Teaching, itself, has dropped the teacher's name. It is no longer (as in the Bible) the *Torah of Moses* ("Remember the Law of Moses my servant which I commanded him in Horeb before all Israel"), but, barely, and anonymously, *Torah*.

It is this *Torah*, in its length and breadth and depth, which is Judaism and which, in the words of the prayer-book, "planted in our midst everlasting life"; and when Hillel gave the definition, with which this essay sets out, what he said was not: "This is the whole of *Judaism*," but: "This is the whole *Torah*."

Hillel added at once: "The root is commentary; go and learn." The addi-

tion is all-important. Judaism is a life and a history and a civilization rather than a bare system of ethics or theology; and from the far-off days of Abraham it has passed through many vicissitudes and many phases of which the Biblical, the Rabbinic and the philosophical are only the three most easily named. As Hillel recognized over nineteen centuries ago, there is a great deal of "commentary" and it has to be learned; for religions (like most other things) live not in their generalities but in their specific particulars.

## II

Judaism is what is called by theologians a monotheism, that is, devotion to one God; and God is conceived of by Judaism as the creator and maintainer of everything that exists. He is thus not only a distant first cause. He is an ever-present help and supporter.

The unity of God means unity of control in the created world. The king of Aram in the Biblical story, having been beaten by Ahab's troops in the hills, was advised to make a second attack in the valley because (his advisers said) the Jewish God is obviously a God of the hills. But he was wrong. The Jewish God, or rather the God of Judaism, is God of the whole earth.

More characteristically, he is the "God of Heaven," that is, above all geographical considerations. The whole creation is the manifestation of one will. There is one regular order: law, not chaos. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease."

This physical order we can see through our eyes; and we are bidden to lift up our eyes to the stars and from

the sight of nature, see nature's God. More subtly, one of the Psalmists says: "Shall not the creator of the eye have sight?" If we can see, our creator, too, must be able to see; and see (here the metaphor or analogy or inference is bold indeed) "into *our hearts* and understand all our actions." The Pentateuch strikes an even deeper note. "Be ye holy," it says, "as I your God am holy." The meaning is clearly not that God is holy as we are, but that we should try and be holy as God is. God is not only creator of the physical world, and the physical is not the only order. There is a moral order too, and it too is rooted in God. God "tells us what is good." He gives the pattern to which our lives should conform. He is the source of our powers, not only of physical but also of moral perception.

The Psalmist's sentence is an argument; and it has often been expanded in modern times and used to the effect that the creator of mind cannot himself, be less than mind. The sentence from the Pentateuch is an injunction. The recognition of God's holiness involves for man an obligation to behave differently. We cannot "walk before" him without changing our ways. God has a way for us of his own and it is not the way of untutored man; it is something that has to be learned. And what has to be learned has to be taught; whence the need for teaching, i.e., Torah. Thus, Torah and its study became the centre of Jewish life, shaping it and elevating it and transforming it through the civilising influence of learning and education. Without knowledge we are not yet men.

That God is the one creator of all; that he has told what is good; that men should walk in the path of the good;

that in so walking he finds his real nature—all this is traditionally expressed in the Biblical formula that man is created in the likeness of God. Yet Judaism would seem to affirm that the uniqueness of man lies not so much in that as a bare fact, as in the further fact that man knows it. "Beloved is man," as a Rabbinic teacher puts it, "in that he was created in the likeness of God; but it was by a special act of love that it was *made known to him* that he was so created." For the knowledge brings with it a new status and a new dignity and a new type of obligation, the obligation to measure himself by a higher standard than himself. That man knows that he is made in God's likeness means that he recognizes and realises that he is to be judged by a higher standard than himself.

### III

Unity is thus seen as the universal pattern. The one God created one world. In this one world he created one man, the one progenitor of human-kind. Mankind constitutes one family, and the moral consequence is drawn explicitly. Since we are one family, why should we fight one another: "Have we not one father; hath not one God created us?" The Mishnah puts a similar idea in a similarly simple way. Since we are all descended from the one Adam, it says, no one's "blood" is 'bluer' than any other's.

The ethical objection to polytheism is that it makes possible a variety of moral standards: an act disapproved of by one divinity may be approved of by another. Monotheism cuts all that away. There is one standard only, one right and wrong. And the one God, being a creator God, cares for his creation. He is thus "father" as well as "king."

Judaism registers this in the names with which it addresses God. In the everyday Blessings of the Prayerbook he is Our God, King of the Universe; in the Grace after meals, the Merciful One; in penitential prayer, Our Father, Our King, or, our Father which art in Heaven. A favorite Rabbinic mode of address is the All-Merciful; another, the Holy One, Blessed be He. A very usual circumlocution is the simplest of all: The Name.

For there is a sobriety about the attitude of Judaism to God. It rejects familiarity. It keeps distance. It claims no intimate knowledge of God's nature. Indeed, it frowns on over-curiousness. As the Talmud quotes from the book of Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha: "In what is hidden from thee do not enquire." It is only in the moral sphere that it ventures to make positive assertions about God at all; and these affect rather the practical requirements made by God from man than the metaphysical questions addressed by man to God. We have already seen the prophet Micah's affirmation about what God requires of man. The Rabbis follow suit: "As God is merciful, be thou merciful; as he heals the sick, heal thou the sick; as he feeds the hungry, feed thou the hungry." These, they say, are the ways of God, and the duty of man is to "cleave to" them, that is, imitate them and do likewise.

Thus, the doctrine of God in Judaism, however it may have been arrived at, seems in every case to eventuate in a practical outcome. The unity of God, for example, is not an abstract consideration, to be accepted only as an article of theoretical belief. It means one world, one humanity, one universal order, one norm for logic, one standard

for morals; it means that truth and justice are not mere words but a way which man is expected to take and to follow. The idea of God is thus not a bare idea but a living force, thrusting itself into every department of life and claiming us (often vainly) for its own.

A striking illustration of this (and it is the more striking because it is unexpected and not in accordance with modern taste) is provided by the Pentateuchal law of sanitation. The law in Deuteronomy prescribes that latrines should be *outside* the camp; and the reason given is: "the Lord thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, *therefore*, thy camp shall be holy". The comment I would make is this. That God is holy is a conventional statement to be found in the scriptures of most religions; and "holy men" (particularly in the East today) are no novelty. But the holiness of God in Judaism has a concrete and practical relevance to the way in which ordinary men should live. The English proverb uses abstract terms and says that cleanliness is next to godliness; but Judaism, and the Hebrew language, is always concrete. It is God, the Most High, the Creator of Heaven and Earth, who refuses to abide with us if we live in dirt: "*therefore* shall thy camp be holy."

This concreteness of Judaism is so important and pervading a characteristic that it requires further illustration.

#### IV

The American psychologist William James advised the young, whenever they felt inclined to kindness, not to leave the feeling without an outlet but to work it off in a specific act, e.g., giving up one's seat in a tram-car to an old person, or visiting a neglected aunt. Un-

less a feeling is exercised, he said, it will become atrophied and dead. In somewhat the same way, Judaism has always insisted on translating general virtues into particular duties. I offer an example or two.

All religions speak of goodness and justice and love in general. Judaism adds concrete specifications. Justice, for example, means having one set of weights only; not taking bribes; not favoring the rich nor (a striking novelty this) the poor. These may not be the only ways in which justice can be exhibited or maintained, but they are at least practical ones and in our power. And they prevent our enthusiasm for the general idea of justice obliterating our interest in particular just acts! Kindness to animals, unexceptionable as a principle but not always exemplified in practice, assumes in Judaism the definite commands not to plow with an ox and an ass together, and not to muzzle the ox when it is treading out the corn; kindness to human beings is to be manifested in such acts as paying your workman every day and not taking in pledge the instruments of a man's livelihood. You love your neighbor by helping him with his load and returning his strayed animals; you look after the poor by leaving them the gleanings of the harvest and vineyard. Love and charity may be something more than this but it is at least this; and it is in and through the practice of particular acts such as these detailed in the Law that the habit of right action, and ultimately right feeling, is formed.

The same characteristic of concrete particularity may be observed in the later great texts of Judaism: the Mishnah, the Talmud, the Codes. A glance at a chapter of Maimonide's Code, for

example, will show that he always starts from particular cases, and only afterwards sums up in a general rule. This may be a weakness from the point of view of legal theory but it is a blessing to the public. Law exists in order to help human beings, not human beings in order to help the law; and it is this principle which forms the basis of much which is peculiar to Judaism, and particularly in the Pentateuch itself. For what is remarkable about Pentateuchal legislation is that it is concerned deeply with the individual human being and bases itself squarely on his human feelings.

Thus, in the law of punishment, a wrongdoer is not to be punished beyond his strength so that he should not break down in public and be shamed. We are bidden (on thirty-six separate occasions, according to Talmudic reckoning) to show kindness to foreigners. And why? Because 'we know the *heart* of the foreigner'. And how do we know the heart of the foreigner? Because (in the land of Egypt) we have been foreigners ourselves. We are enjoined to rest on the Sabbath day and to allow rest to the other members of the household. The phrase used is: "That thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest *as well as thou*." That is to say, master and servant are both men and, as such, have the same need of (and enjoyment in) rest; and it is notable that the Hebrew phrase translated in this verse "as well as thou" is the same as that used in the "Great Commandment": "Thou shalt love thy neighbour *as thyself*." The appeal is from human feeling to human feeling: 'Thou shalt remember that *thou* wast a bondman... *therefore* I command thee to do this thing'. A most delicate instance is that of the "beauti-

ful woman taken in war:" "Thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not deal with her as a chattel, *because thou didst humble her.*"

If consideration for the individual human being is at the root of much of Pentateuchal legislation, it is not a matter for surprise that the same characteristic pervades historical Judaism as a whole. Moritz Lazarus in his *Ethics of Judaism* describes the working, in the Berlin Jewish community at the end of the 19th Century, of a 150 year old system of communal help to families left in immediate want owing to the death of their head. The system was so devised that both givers and takers remained not only unknown but, indeed, unknowable. This is in the full spirit of Talmudic legislation. The Rabbis of the Talmud held that to help one's fellow man is the best of all deeds but to bring shame on him is one of the worst: a man should be (like Job) "eyes to the blind" without being himself seen. Similarly, one should not wrong one's fellow "even in words"; and the thought is developed with such appreciation of human failings as to lead to a prohibition not only of adulteration of articles of food and drink but also of the very asking of a shopkeeper the price of goods if we have no intention of buying.

All this is made a matter for *legislation*. It is the subject of specific articles in the Codes. Just as the Sabbath is the seventh day and no other, and just as charity should be given to the extent of a tenth of one's income, so even the love of God itself, the highest end set before man, is to be practiced in specific ways. Feeling is made manifest, as it is fostered, through actions prescribed by law. Law may not attain the ideal maximum of the elect few but it secures the

indispensable minimum from the many.

For the "way" is not left for improvisation. It is a way according to rule. The rule is expressed in specific commandments which regulate conduct. However vivid the indignation felt at social wrong and religious abuse, it is void and useless unless it can be shaped in definite moulds. Judaism not only tells us in general to do good. It exemplifies for us in the Commandments what good to do.

## V

The commandments are conventionally distinguished into moral and ceremonial. The convention however, like the distinction, is unsound. Ceremony is the device by which the feeling of the presence of God is brought into everyday life. Thus, whatever its detail may be, its total intent is moral. Similarly, morality does not consist in the mouthing of abstract principles but in acting in a particular way. The duties it imposes are specific, and, therefore, in a sense ceremonial.

For life is an all-day affair. It is lived in definite actions. But if actions have no rhythm or pattern, they are the cause of disorder and discontent. The art of living lies in the imposition of form on the indiscriminate welter of feeling, passion, impulse, emotion and phantasy which are the raw material of our lives; and if this is so of our lives as individuals, it is even more so of our lives as lived with others in the social whole.

A notable example of the inextricable blend of ceremony and morals, alike in the individual and in the social sphere, is offered by the Sabbath. "By nature," as the book of Ecclesiasticus remarks, all days are the same. The picking out of any one of them is, therefore,

an artificial act. It is "legalism," the imposition of an arbitrary and rigid rule on the glorious fluidity of life. Could there be anything more unnatural than the cutting up of the days into weeks and the selecting of any one day in the artificially constructed series of days over against all others?

Although we have in the Sabbath an apparently clear instance of man-made ceremony, it is by no means a meaningless, "external," act. For the benefits of the Sabbath are spiritual as well as physical. It is at once a signal example of moral legislation, and a call to the individual to remind himself what it means to be a man.

The Sabbath is a typical instance of the way in which Judaism succeeded in turning what may have been originally a magical practice or a sporadic fulfilment of a natural need into a moral institution; and the practical fact of its visible beginning and need (it is kept not from midnight to midnight but 'from evening unto evening') helped powerfully to make its purpose manifest. In the same way, the three great annual festivals, all presumably once nature feasts, were re-dedicated to moral ideas. Passover becomes the festival of Freedom. Pentecost, originally a harvest festival, becomes the festival of the giving of the Law. Tabernacles remains associated with nature; yet it is nature transformed. It is genuine nature as opposed to the artificial civilisation of house and town, and brings man back directly to his primary dependence.

But life is much besides Sabbaths and feasts. Man walks before God every day and all the day. His every act is therefore to be hallowed. Those that bear the vessels of God must be themselves clean. The food which comes into our

mouth—the meat we eat—can pollute us. We must see, therefore, that it is fit for consumption.

Jewish food regulations are in principle simple. The religious value of the Dietary Laws lies in the spirit in which they are performed; and those who smile at a "kitchen religion" would do well to ponder the remark of the early Greek philosopher on entering a poor cottage "Here, too, are gods." Judaism would seem to hold that the occupation of a house-wife is a holy one and that a kitchen too is, or can be made, a place of worship. Holiness is not asceticism, a negation of the world and its fullness. It is rather, in the presence and enjoyment of the world and its fullness, a conscious exercise of self-control. It is a guiding, not an obliteration, of natural desire. All hygienic considerations apart, therefore—and yet these should count very strongly—food regulations, however irksome, are of deep moral significance. Just as the weekly Sabbath reminds a man that he is not a mere wage-slave, so abstention from certain foods reminds him that he is not a mere animal, following blindly the first desire of his eyes.

## VI

In Judaism, man's approach to God is never through a mediator. "The soul which sinneth, it shall die." Man has to make his own peace with God. And he has to make his peace with man first. Atonement must be preceded by restitution. This was so by Temple law. The sacrifice was offered only *after* the restitution. It was a public acknowledgment of wrong done, to be made after the wrong had been repaired: "He shall restore in full, and shall add the fifth part more thereto; unto him to whom it ap-

pertains shall he give it . . . And he shall [then and then only] bring his guilt offering unto the Lord . . . and the priest shall make atonement for him . . . and he shall be forgiven." The doctrine is essentially the moral one of individual personal responsibility. When Moses asked to be allowed to take upon himself the sin of his people, he received the stern reply: "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."

How far in time the responsibility extended is not determined. Although the theory of the transmigration of souls is made much of in the Kabbala (as indeed in all Gnostic speculation), Judaism never held to the Eastern doctrine of re-incarnation; that is, it never taught that wrong-doing committed in this life can be expiated in another life (or in a succession of other lives) on this earth; and while it believed in an after-life in which the good persisted and in which wrongs committed were expiated, it was never dogmatic as to its nature. And its emphasis was always on the good. It never insisted on the all-pervading and all-blackening character of sin, and on an everlasting hell. On the contrary. Just as the Bible dwells on the mercy and love of God whose anger does not last for ever, so the living Judaism expressed in the liturgy of the Day of Atonement is one prolonged call to the wrongdoer to change his heart and his ways. It is rather an appeal to the possibilities of good in the worst of us than a threat based on a total and final condemnation of the bad; an appeal based on the conception of the "presence of God" which we have seen throughout to be a guiding principle of Judaism. In the solemn words of the Atonement liturgy: "Thou hast set man apart from

the beginning, and recognised him that he should stand before Thee."

Ultimately, the consideration is of the type known as mystical; but Judaism would, I think, hold suspect at least some part of the present connotation of the word. There is in Judaism no special revelation for the hermit or the contemplative, none even for the "religious;" there is no secret initiation, no opening of hidden mysteries, no esoteric doctrine. God is the preserve of no one man or class of men. The door to Him has no special password. It is open always. All men together are made in the likeness of God, and all men may manifest that likeness within them.

*But*—and the but is all-important—man is not God and God is not man. Man remains man. He stands "in the presence of" God; he walks "in the way of" God; he "appears before" God. He does not *become* God or *disappear in* God. He is not identifiable, certainly never identical, with God. God is the ideal of holiness to which man strives; he is not the psychic or spiritual whole into which man is, or can be, absorbed. The basic religious feeling of Judaism remains that of the Law and the Prophets and the Writings. The eternal God is its dwelling place, and in His light it sees light. But no more.

## VII

A word must be said about the attitude of Judaism to other faiths. The general tone is set by a very early use (or mis-use) of the verse in Exodus (xxii, 28): "Thou shalt not revile the judges." Owing to an ambiguity in the Hebrew word translated "judges," the words could mean: "Thou shalt not revile God or "the gods"; and the injunction was made to mean: "Thou

shalt not revile the gods of *other people*." This may have been a counsel of prudence, but it is also a counsel of wisdom. The mature wisdom of Judaism avoided all religious controversy and recognised value in the beliefs of others. The Talmud, itself, remarks that the pagan is worshipping "not the mountain but the spirit of the mountain"; and from the Apocrypha and Philo and Josephus to Gabirol and Maimonides we are told that adherents of other religions are also seekers: "The yearning of them all is to draw nigh Thee."

But this does not mean that Judaism abandons its own positions, or that it has no positions to abandon. It has its doctrine of unity of God with its corollaries of one world, one humanity, one truth and one good. It has its concrete detail of the right way for man: the Ten Commandments, the Law of Holiness. It has its guiding vision of the creation of man in God's likeness and, with it, the promise of his *re-creation*. It has its institutions, its disciplines, its liturgy, its austerities; its historical sorrows, its annual recall of common joys. It has its great acceptance of the world and its fullness, its condemnation of asceticism, its holding fast to the principle of enjoyment under control. It has its great rejection of polytheism and image-worship, and its abhorrence of all forms of cruelty and injustice. It can agree with Buddhism that there are metaphysical questions the solution of which is irrelevant to the religious life; but it clings to the link between God who is at least personal (though he is, too, much more) and the individual soul, a soul which, within our purview at least, is one and enduring. It is this living dependence of the living soul on the living God ("This God is our God for ever and

ever; He will be our guide even unto death"; "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee") which turns what might have been a bare deism, on the one hand, or a bare moralism on the other, into the most lasting, in human history, of all religions.

Dreams are notoriously an index to character. The dream of Judaism is of the coming of the Messiah; or rather, since the Messiah in Judaism is not so much a person as the inaugurator of a new epoch in history, of the coming of the Messianic age. A famous picture of this age is that of Isaiah (Ch. 11). It depicts its coming into being as the victory of wisdom over violence, of persuasion over force; and it sees the fruit of the victory as the triumph of justice and the advent of universal peace. But all these, peace, justice and wisdom, are manifestations of the spirit patterned on and required by the unity of God. It is only when and because the earth is filled with the knowledge of God that men will do no more violence or wrong.

This is a vision of the end, but it reflects the call constituting Judaism at the beginning. Abraham's family was singled out to follow the way of God, that is, to do justice and judgment. The function of the "shoot of the stock of Jesse" upon whom "the spirit of God" is to "rest" is to complete the task and bring that knowledge of the way to all.

When Maimonides in the concluding chapter of his *Guide for the Perplexed* came to offer in his turn a pocket definition of Judaism, he did so in the words of Jeremiah: "let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me that I am the Lord which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth;

for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." The last words ("For in these things I delight") mean, he says, that what God requires from man is the exercise on this earth of kindness, judgment and righteousness: the knowledge of God is to lead to the imitation of His ways. Thus Maimonides, too, the author of the first and greatest of the standard codes of Judaism, gives clear expression to what we have seen to be its essential teaching from the first.

And he does not shrink from the explicit drawing of the logical consequence of monotheism. In principle, there can be no exclusions. As his last word, he added (tradition says, in his own hand) a Hebrew distich to the original manuscript of the Guide (the book itself was written in Arabic):

"God is very near to all who call  
him  
If they call him in truth and turn  
to him.  
He is found by everyone who seeks  
him,  
If he walks forward and goes not  
astray."

Salvation is from God, but it has to be sought and striven for; and it is for all who seek and strive.

### VIII

There are many strands in Judaism; and it is easy (as indeed might well have been done in this paper) to fasten on any of them to the exclusion of any or every other. The only remedy is to follow Hillel's advice: "Go and learn," and learn as much and as widely and as freely as possible.