

A Discovery of Judaism

THE
ROAD
BACK

by Mayer Schiller

THE ROAD BACK

Just what is Torah Judaism? What did it mean for the Jewish people till one or two centuries ago? And why did it simply vanish for the great majority of world Jewry? Is it an ongoing living force, though, of durable worth in our time?

Most Jews today can give no intelligent answers. The whole subject is a great big blank for them, filled at best with vague notions or distortions gained from sources outside (often inimical to) Torah Judaism.

This is a book by a young American Jew who started outside the fold and worked his way in. From the background of a non-religious family, an inner quest sent him on an intensive, unsparing program of self-education. He *had* to learn about Torah Judaism, till he knew the full story, past and present.

Drawing on his vast scholarly reading, personal experience and unshakable conviction, the author has written this book for the Jew approaching Judaism (like him) from the outside. It is above all an honest book, without oversimplification or pap, presenting, step by step, a highly readable case for the truths of the Torah.

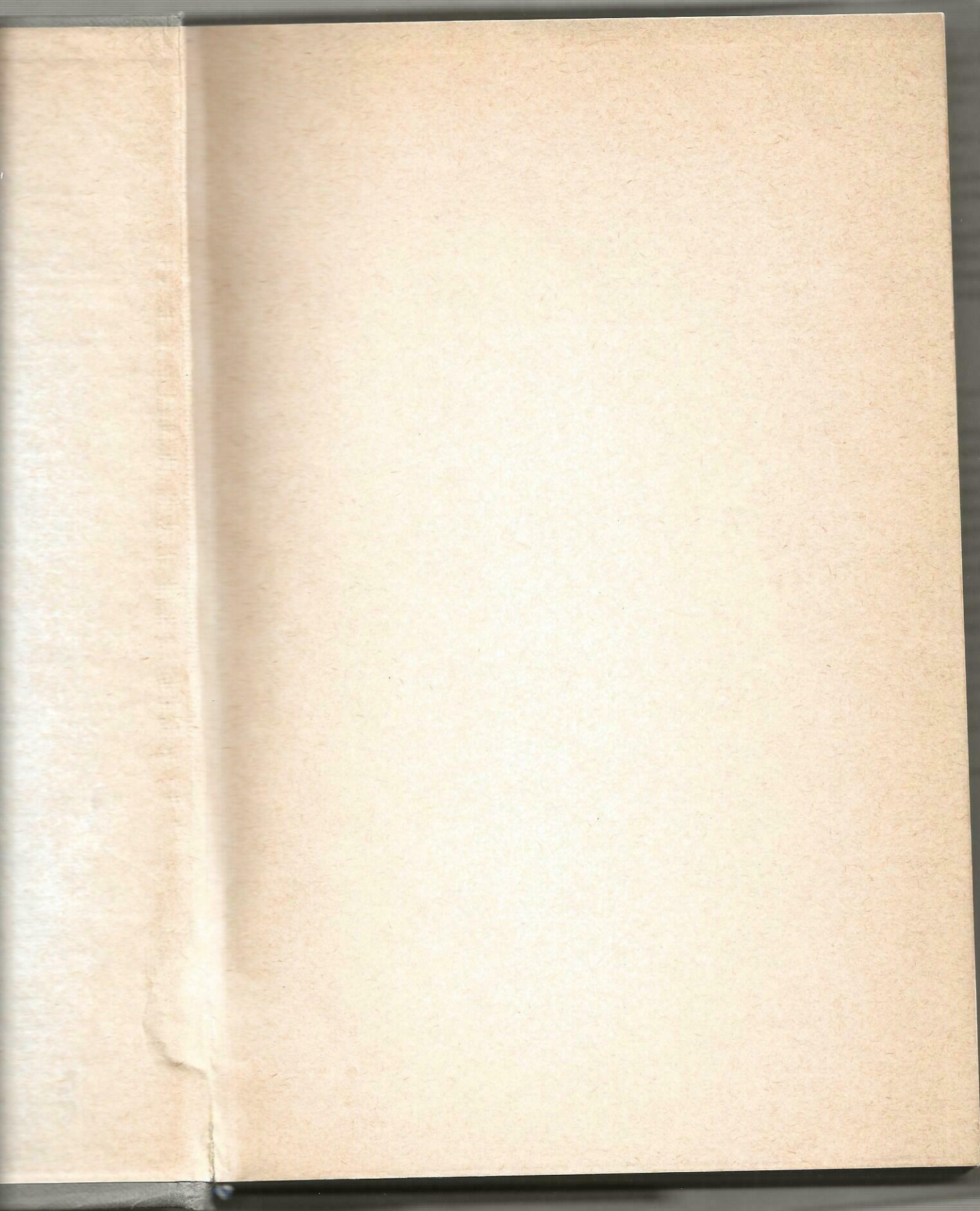
For his start, drawing on the most up-to-date sociological data, the author gives a concise yet basically all-inclusive overview of the "religious condition" of American Jewry — a condition that remains (take it as you will) seriously disturbing, even frightening.

Inevitably the question arises: *How did we ever get to this?*

With a learned surgeon's scalpel the author turns back to the Age of Enlightenment and shows how its unlovely but Jewish offspring, "Reform Judaism," arose directly from it amid German Jewry. From a wide scholarly knowledge of the primary sources, he draws an accurate, devastating picture of the anti-religious ideologies that filled the minds and the air of 18th-century Europe. And he shows what followed in the pomposity of Reform Judaism. Rare indeed is the thoughtful modern Jew whose apathy will remain unshaken after he confronts the philosophical wellsprings that have led, beneath the sands of time, to his own indifference and "cloud of unknowing."

The negative aspect is, however, only one

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THE | ROAD | BACK

MAYER
SCHILLER

foreword by Norman Lamm

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MAYER
SCHILLER

 **THE
ROAD
BACK**

a
discovery
of
Judaism
without
embellishments

word by Norman Lamm



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Acknowledgment

I should like to take this opportunity to thank Rabbi Norman Lamm, whose encouragement, inspiration and assistance made *The Road Back* a reality. In addition, my heartfelt thanks are extended to Messrs Philipp and Yitzchok Feldheim, of Feldheim Publishers, who each contributed in various ways to the completion of the work.

M.S.

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Foreword

This decade is a trying one for the world Jewish community. The State of Israel, Russian Jewry, Syrian Jewry — mention of these alone is enough to evoke the tribulations of Jews in the 70's. Our haphazard fortunes are uppermost in the minds and hearts of most Jews, and are the common knowledge of most literate non-Jews.

What is equally fateful and perhaps more puzzling is the religious condition of Jewry, especially American Jewry. We seem to be going in all directions at once — to the right and to the left, assimilating and returning, more Jewish and less Jewish, emphasizing our ethnicity and abandoning all in favor of an elusive universalism. Most observers, indeed, see two contradictory movements as part of a process of polarization: an erosion of those on the fringes, and a quickening by those at or near the core. Large numbers are assimilating by intermarriage or simply by an act of deliberate historical amnesia — forgetting 4,000 years of Jewish history in the space of one generation. But the counter-trend is far more promising to Jewish survival — and far more fascinating: the movement of return, of *teshuva*.

The "returnees" to Judaism have not yet produced a significant literature, either autobiographical or intellectual. When such a literature does appear, it should prove a gold-mine to socio-

logists and psychologists and, more important, an intriguing eye-opener to those who are searching, doubting their doubts, and daring to challenge the tired clichés that have for so long substituted for genuine thinking and feeling in the secular community.

The Road Back is one of the first of what I expect will be an increasing number of books of this genre of "the literature of return." It presents a cogent case for finding "the road back" to Judaism. Erudite, engaging, humorous, passionate, searching, it is above all an appeal to the conscience, the mind, and the heart of Jews who are willing to inquire and to explore what their Jewishness is all about and what it means — and may come to mean — to them. One need not subscribe to all the author says in order to admire his qualities of learning and integrity.

The strengths and weaknesses of this unusual volume cannot be adequately appreciated without knowing something about the author — who says nothing about himself in these pages. Yet the value of the book to the reader is enhanced by some information about Mayer Schiller, himself a "returnee."

I first encountered Mr. Schiller on the telephone. He called to query me about an article I had written and which puzzled him. The hour-long conversation left me uplifted; the conversation was a genuine dialogue, an adventure of intellectual and spiritual exploration, with a man of wide learning, deep probing, and profound caring. Three more such telephone conversations took place, and I invited Mr. Schiller to lecture to a graduate seminar I was teaching at Yeshiva University that year.

I was not quite prepared for the tall, youthful-looking twenty-five-year-old man who stood before me and whom I introduced to my students as "a dear friend whom I have never met before." He was dressed in full chasidic regalia — black hat, frock coat, "gartel," and all the rest. My class was uncertain about the nature of the practical joke I was about to perpetrate on them. But as soon as the guest lecturer sat down and quietly spoke, without notes and with much humor and humanity, they were mesmerized. At the end of the session, neither they nor their teacher believed the lecturer when he denied having any post-graduate academic degrees in history and philosophy and claimed that, indeed, he was a high-school drop-out!

Mayer Schiller was born in Brooklyn to a family non-observant of Jewish law. Among his parents and grandparents were socialists, agnostics, and atheists — Jews generally indifferent to their heritage. Seemingly without external influences, he began agonizing over the larger questions of life's meaning at the age of 11, and by a year or so later undertook to observe the religious commandments while still in public school. He prevailed upon his parents to allow him to enter a Yeshiva in the 9th grade, and before long left high school and entered a chasidic *kolel*, where he devoted all his school time to Talmud. Whatever secular learning he has — and I leave it to the reader to judge its extent — he acquired on his own and in his "leisure" time. An extraordinary feat by an obviously extraordinary young man.

The young autodidact has now undertaken to teach, both professionally in the Yeshiva High School of Queens, and by means of writing. Another book of Mr. Schiller — on political philosophy, and unrelated to Jewish themes — is scheduled for publication shortly. But the present volume is one in which he has invested not only his mind, but his heart and soul as well.

Whether others will accept his invitation to join him on "the road back," only the individual reader can determine for himself. But surely all will feel moved and stimulated, even if not convinced, and wish the author's fellow travellers "bon voyage."

NORMAN LAMM

October 23, 1977
Yeshiva University, New York

I WHERE WE ARE

PART ONE

We do not know what is happening to us, and that is precisely this thing that is happening to us — the fact of not knowing what is happening to us. Modern man begins by being disoriented with respect to himself, de payse; he is outside his own country, thrust into new circumstances which are like an unknown land. Such is always the vital sensation which besets men in periods of historical crisis.

JOSE ORTEGA Y GASSET (1883–1955)

At the end of days, before the coming of the Messiah, God shall take a string, a "string of faith," and stretch it around the world. Many a man will attempt to grab that string and to hang on to it. However, God will appoint two angels to hold the string at both ends, instructing them to shake it violently as the days of the Messiah near. It will become increasingly difficult to maintain a grasp on the string, and as the years go by, many, many will slip and fall. I am telling you this, my

brothers, so that those living at that time will know, and take heed.

RABBI ISRAEL FRIEDMAN OF RIZHYN,
Russia (1797-1850)

Writing in the March, 1950 issue of *Commentary* Magazine, the noted sociologist Nathan Glazer offered the following description of Jewish life in America:

A social group with clearly marked boundaries exists, but the source of the energies that hold [it] separate, and of the ties that bind it together has become completely mysterious.¹

Now Mr. Glazer's "mystery," simple as its solution may have seemed to previous generations of Jews, has seemingly baffled not only one of *Commentary's* leading luminaries but a majority of the prestigious social analysts of our time as well. We are periodically treated to both popular and learned treatises by the "leading thinkers" of various philosophical persuasions — each purporting to define, "once and for all," "beyond a shadow of a doubt," the exact nature of Judaism. Some of these influential observers have concluded that Judaism is no more than a national or, alternatively, a racial grouping. Others regard it as a culture, composed, as are other cultures, of assorted customs and folkways. Still other pundits think of Judaism as nothing more than a vestigial relic of medieval times destined in short order for Trotsky's proverbial dust-bin of history.

This marked disagreement among the "intellectual élite" of our society has had a profound impact upon the attitudes and beliefs of rank-and-file Jews. As a renowned observer of religion in Ameri-

ca, the late Professor Will Herberg of Drew University, wrote in 1955:

... among ... American Jews there was perplexity and restlessness ... What was it, in the last analysis, that made a Jew a Jew, and kept him a Jew?²

Thus, the demonstrable inability of the supposed experts to unravel the "mystery" of Jewish existence has greatly contributed to the prevailing sense of confusion among modern Jews. "Those in the know" remain dishearteningly helpless to coherently articulate the basics of Judaism. Indeed, many, if not most of them, would deny that Judaism possesses any basics at all. This muddled state of affairs has reduced the outline of Jewish convictions, once clearly defined, to a medley of discordant voices. As a result, it is not surprising that the Jewish man-in-the-street exhibits an apathetical indifference to the contents of "the faith of Israel."

The leading Jewish intellectuals, at a total loss to express their attachment to the "seed of Abraham" in religious terms, are forced therefore to call for a mere sentimental loyalty to Judaism as a means of perpetuating its existence. For the most part these nostalgic feelings come hand-in-hand with a total repudiation of the doctrines and precepts of traditional faith. Indeed, many of the acknowledged leaders of Jewish thought not only feel their religious heritage to be irrational and outmoded, but they are also convinced that the "children of Israel" are slowly being written out of the script of history. However, while preparing to go down with what seems to them to be a sinking ship, they steadfastly call upon the Jewish community at large to maintain a tenderhearted, romantic connection with the old vessel. Professor Daniel Bell gave voice to such feelings when in 1961 he wrote:

I write as one of the middle generation, one who has *not* faith but memory ...

... There are responsibilities of participation even when the community of which one is a part is a community woven by the thinning strands of memory.³

In the words of another member of the *bios theoretikos* of *avant-garde* Judaism, Norman Podhoretz, Jews owe loyalty to their faith, despite its essentially fallible nature and poor prognosis:

...no person born into this idea (of Judaism) can dismiss it or refuse to acknowledge the loyalties and responsibilities it imposes on him... I will not pretend that anything very concrete in the way of programs or philosophy follows from such piety. But I will register my conviction that one ought to feel a sense of "historical reverence" to Jewish tradition even, or perhaps especially, if one is convinced that the curtain is about to drop on the last act of a very long play.⁴

Factually speaking, though, these attempts to cast Judaism in terms of an Alamo-like last stand have not inspired many Jews to go down fighting at their own Little Big Horns. For all practical purposes the various impassioned calls for Jewish fidelity based on appeals to cultural ties, romantic nostalgia and the like have fallen on deaf ears. Having been told by polemicists for years that their faith is barren of both doctrines and obligatory practices, the twentieth-century Jew finds it well-nigh impossible to muster up the internal fortitude which the self-sacrifices of religious life inevitably entail. That the average Jew has accepted the teachings of the intelligentsia concerning his faith has been amply demonstrated in recent years. For example, a poll taken recently in an average suburban Jewish community revealed the astonishing fact that over 85 percent of those questioned believed that "to be a good Jew" it "makes no difference" if one disregards many of the basic laws of Judaism. Furthermore, when asked what was considered as "essential" to "being a good Jew," 93 percent chose the paltry statement, "to lead an ethical and moral life." As for the doctrines of Judaism, only 48 percent felt it was "essential" to "know the fundamentals of Judaism." In addition, the survey reveals several logical absurdities. A case in point would be that 85 percent of those queried believed it "essential" for a Jew to "accept his being a Jew, and not try to hide it," while only 23 percent thought it "essential" to

"marry within the Jewish faith." Consequently it appears that 62 percent regard Judaism as somewhat akin to an old, worn-out suit. As long as it must be worn, the wearer defends its looks, but when the opportunity presents itself, he has every right to discard it.⁵

Professor Jacob Neusner, in his book *American Judaism: Adventure in Modernity*, points out several interesting aspects of the above survey and similar studies. He calls attention to the fact that Jews tend to define their faith in terms reminiscent of Ethical Deism:

The definition of "being Jewish" begins with ethics — the least peculiar, most inarticulate, side of life . . . If it is ethical for a Jew to guide the frail old lady across a busy street, it is also ethical for a Boy Scout to do so. And so, being Jewish and being a Boy Scout functionally are pretty much the same thing. . . .

The "holy people" evidently has disintegrated. First, Jews are no longer certain just what makes them into a people. Second, they see themselves as anything but holy, they interpret in a negative way the things that make them Jewish and different from others. . . . So the advent of modernity seems to have changed everything. A group once sure of itself and convinced of its value under the aspect of eternity now is unsure of who it is. . . . The "children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" have lost touch with the fathers. The people of the Lord seems to have forgotten why it has come into being. Everyday reality contains for ordinary Jews no hint of a great conception of human history. It has become a long succession of meaningless but uncongenial encounters. Sinai is a mountain. Tourists make the trip to climb it. The "Torah of Moses" is a scroll removed from its holy ark on the Sabbath, normally in the absence of the "loyal sons," who rarely see it, less often hear it, and cannot understand its language. The Messiah at the end of time is too far away to be discerned; anyhow, no one is looking in that direction.⁶

In point of fact, the terms "disintegrated," "unsure," "meaningless" and the like do not even begin to tell the whole story. In

illustration of the problem's true dimensions let us look at synagogue attendance among Jews in New York City, the center of Jewish life in America. The Jews of that metropolis registered almost the lowest religious service attendance of all city religious and ethnic groups. Only 19.8 percent of the city's Jews went to services at least "once a month, or a few times a month." This figure should be interpreted in contrast to the Negroes, 30.7 percent of whom worshipped communally with the same frequency, the Puerto Ricans with 24 percent, the Italians with 20.5 percent and overall Protestants with 24.8 percent. Indeed, when we examine the figures for native-born Jews alone the percentage of those attending synagogue at least once a month drops to an unbelievable 5.8 percent, which is rock bottom among *all* the groups polled, lower even than the Irish with their 7.8 percent. The Jews also far outdistance other groups in the percentage of those totally apathetic to their faith. Both native and foreign-born Jews top the list of those who "never" frequent a "house of worship," with the American-born at 16.9 percent, double their nearest competitors, the Puerto Ricans, with their 8.3 percent.⁷

Not only in the area of joint worship, but in their private lives as well, are the followers of the "law of Moses" abandoning their faith. The speed at which second- and third-generation Jews in America relinquish the heritage of their forefathers is phenomenal. With the exception of candle lighting during the festival of Chanuka (which is clearly the result of its coincidence on the calendar with Christmas, and therefore for our purposes irrelevant) and celebrating the Passover holiday with the traditional feast of the Seder (which provides an excellent opportunity for a yearly family reunion and is equally irrelevant), the commandments of Judaism are being rapidly discarded by the "seed of Abraham" as the effects of "melting-pot" assimilation are felt. A recent survey conducted among Jews in Providence, Rhode Island, revealed the following startling statistics:⁸

PERCENT OF JEWISH POPULATION WHO "ALWAYS"
OBSERVE THE LAW IN QUESTION

<i>Law</i>	<i>First- Generation American</i>	<i>Second- Generation American</i>	<i>Third- Generation American</i>
Sabbath Candle Lighting	60.6	37.2	25.5
Kosher Meat Observances	62.0	33.8	19.0
Separate Dishes for Meat and Dairy	53.0	25.2	15.7
Chanukah Candle Lighting	74.5	74.0	76.5

Ultimately, the abandonment of Jewish concepts and precepts tends to lead to the total repudiation of Jewish identity as represented by the rising tide of Jews marrying outside their faith. Recent studies of the matter place the number of Jews marrying non-Jews at over 40 percent of the total Jewish populace. Here, as in other manifestations of assimilation, the figures ominously continue to rise by leaps and bounds:⁹

PERCENTAGE OF JEWISH MARRIAGES IN U.S.A.
INVOLVING A NON-JEWISH PARTNER

<i>Year</i>	<i>Percent</i>
1931	3.0
1941-45	6.7
1946-50	6.7
1951-55	6.4
1956-60	5.9
1961-65	17.4
1966-72	31.7
Current Estimate	43.0

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 Percent

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6.7

6.7

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17.4

31.7

43.0

It was on the basis of polls and surveys such as the aforementioned that *Look*, some years back, in a much heralded article, pronounced the Jews a "vanishing" breed — a opinion which, incidentally, was in total accord with that of noted historians such as Arnold Toynbee and Herbert Spencer, both of whom have diagnosed the condition of Judaism as terminal and predicted its immediate demise.

Whether Judaism is, in reality, down for the ten count still remains to be seen. (In the meantime, it has at least managed to outlive *Look*!) However, the fact of its being "down" can simply not be denied. Despite the fact that assorted panaceas have been offered in the past two hundred years as substitutes for traditional Judaism, the ever-surging tide of total religious dissolution has clearly not been stemmed. Regardless of the often commendable intentions of various innovators, their "new interpretations" and "new formulations" of the ancient faith have only served to compound the chaotic state of affairs among modern Jews. By calling into question the basic tenets of the Jewish faith they have only increased the contemporary Jews' sense of disorientation and alienation.

In 1967, even Dr. Maurice Eisendrath, a leading ideologue of the so-called "progressive" elements in Judaism, was forced to admit that

We have subtracted religion from the real substance of American Jewish life. We have... striven... to sustain American Jews for years on a heady fare of fighting anti-semitism, building a Jewish state in Israel, giving to philanthropy.... These foods have become too bland even to nourish us any longer.... The causes that once galvanized American Jews have lost their steam.... Jews will survive in America essentially as a faith — not as an ethnic or national group.¹⁰

"Jews will survive... as a faith." But the question remains: What sort of faith? Can the centuries-old faith of the "congregation of Israel" remain vibrant in the technocratic age and relevant to the hearts and minds of twentieth-century Jews? On a more basic level,

to paraphrase Professor Herberg (see page 14 above): Does anybody really know any more what "made a Jew a Jew?" What is the ultimate nature of the puzzling "ties" of Nathan Glazer (see page 13 above), which seemingly serve to bind Jews so firmly together?

Increasingly, Jews are beginning to feel uneasy with the bland platitudes of secularized versions of their faith. Even some members of the "scholarly elite" have begun to recast the problems in terms that seem to beckon for a theological solution. Marshall Sklare, a noted student of Jewish sociological trends, concluded a study of intermarriage and its implications with the following pointed observations:

As the evidence accumulates that Jewish survival in America depends upon each individual Jew...the answer to the question "What do you stand for when you remain separate?" may well demand the development of a new consciousness in the community. This will not be the first time in history that social conditions have impelled a people to philosophical discussion and involvement. If the problem of intermarriage should engender such a consciousness — the kind which has been foreign to the activism of American Jewry — it will have had a positive effect on the quality of Jewish life. If it does not, the negative consequences are indeed ominous to contemplate.¹¹

Apparently Sklare has concluded that only by developing a rational demonstration for the continued existence of the "seed of Abraham" can the Jew avoid being totally swallowed up in the sea of intermarriage. Indeed, in the seventies increasing numbers of Jewish thinkers have carried their ideologies "beyond the melting pot" and have arrived at basically the same conclusions as Eisendrath and Sklare: namely, that what Judaism needs most in order to endure is a lucid re-statement of its own intrinsic nature, of its *raison d'être* for continuing to "remain separate." In sum, Jews need a reason to *want* to survive.

Thus, many Jewish intellectuals have slowly come upon the only

logically defensible excuse for Jewish self-preservation: a sense of national transcendental purpose. As Jews continue to desert their faith *en masse*, it has become frighteningly clear that to be Jewish and to remain Jewish in the modern age requires more than a "bagels-and-lox" attachment to cultural continuity. As sociologist Charles Liebman foresees the future structure of the ancient faith:

Increasingly, Judaism will retain the identification of only those whose commitment is a very deep one and those who are willing to pay the high cost of sacrificing age, occupational, or other group identities for their Judaism. It seems to me that this can occur only among those who believe that the source of their Jewish identity is transcendent and authoritative.¹²

However, despite these and other somewhat promising indications, most signs at present continue to point to increasingly more difficult times for the "people beloved of God." Despite the fact that many Jews still determinably cling to the fact of their being Jewish, and in Professor Neusner's words consider it "central to their very being," these feelings are only vaguely articulated and are experienced generally only on the level of cultural, ethical or national affiliation. Indeed, Jews seek to maintain this affiliation in spite of their total disregard for all things distinctly Jewish.

The situation reveals itself as a highly ambiguous, disconcerting one. On the one hand, Jews yearn for some feeling of continuity with their faith, yet they persistently reject all pre-requisites for establishing just such a connection. On the one hand, the modern "children of Israel" identify with a "thing" known to them as Judaism, yet they abandon all its component parts as embodied in its beliefs and practices. Jews remain trapped in a "no-man's land," where feelings, emotions and childhood memories vie with historical, cultural and environmental pressures to produce a heavy crossfire of conflicting ties. The sad fact seems to be that, although many Jews intermarry or assimilate in other less noticeable ways, the majority only drift along, puzzled about the nature of their

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commitment to their faith and their people. The overall view of the future of the Jewish people in the current era is filled with questions of the most exacting and vexing sort. As Nathan Glazer once lamented, after surveying the situation of Jews in twentieth-century America:

What can still come of it, I do not know.¹³

he overall view of
era is filled with
As Nathan Glazer
Jews in twentieth-

I WHERE WE ARE

PART TWO

"Cheshire-Puss," she began rather timidly...

"Would you tell me please, which way I ought to go from here?"

*"That depends a great deal on where you want to go," said
the Cat.*

"I don't much care where," said Alice.

"Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the Cat.

LEWIS CARROLL,
Alice in Wonderland

The sense of alienation, of purposelessness, which afflicts the modern Jew today, is of course, not only to be found among the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It envelopes all of Western society in general. A profound and painful lack of clarity, a sensation of anchor-less drift appear to typify the entire current epoch in history. This anxiety was dubbed *anomie* by the famed sociologist Emile Durkheim. He describes this contemporary malaise as

a state of complete normlessness and meaninglessness [which occurs] upon institutional and moral breakdown.

Writing in his classic work, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, Durkheim elaborated on the exact nature of the moral breakdown. He wrote:

All man's pleasure in acting, moving and exerting himself implies the sense that his efforts are not in vain and that by walking he had advanced. However, one does not advance when one walks toward no goal, or — which is the same thing — when his goal is infinity. . . . To pursue a goal which is by nature unattainable is to condemn oneself to a state of perpetual unhappiness.¹

The historical origins of this sorrowful state are not exceptionally hard to trace. They seem to have their point of manifest genesis

some two hundred years ago,* when mankind began to see fit to cast aside its time-honored view of a God-centered reality. It was then, during the heady days of the eighteenth century, of the "Age of Enlightenment," that man cut himself adrift from his firm moorings in a theocentric universe, and was inextricably swept out by the current of secular ideology into the bizarre and hostile sea of doubt where he now flounders. By rejecting the once almost universally acclaimed concepts of a Divinely created universe and a Divinely ordained set of laws for humankind, modern man crossed a decisive Rubicon. The elimination of God from the focal point of the human equation opened a huge gap under the feet of a once pious humanity and revealed a confusing and frightening abyss below.

We shall return to examine the historical crossroads of the "Age of Reason" in greater detail in the following chapter. For our present purposes, it is sufficient to note the fact that from that time on the central theme of most intellectual endeavors has been that of "searching." Two hundred years have now passed during which time man has been hunting for some explanation of life, for some system of meaning with which to set at rest his yearning soul. What that perceptive student of modernity, Simone Weil, used to describe as the universally experienced "need for roots" has never before in history been so painfully felt. Casting about for some original scheme capable of bringing peace to his anomic soul, contemporary man has experimented with literally hundreds of secular tonics, each designed to bring order to his existence. Liberty, equality, democracy, capitalism, socialism, communism, subjectivism, relativism, secular nationalism, secular humanism, internationalism and scores of other systems have all been sampled, and in the long run they have been found wanting: unable to satisfy the skeptical mind and pained heart of our incredulous age.

*The term "manifest genesis" is most appropriate here, for the basic components of various modern heresies seem to be ever-present in history. It was in the eighteenth century that they began to emerge as the *dominant* force in the Western world.

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By the latter half of the twentieth century, though, material abundance and the mind-deadening quality of endless routines and senseless diversions have seemingly immunized man to the cries of his tormented heart. However, as the psychologist Erich Fromm discerningly noted:

Suppose that in our Western Culture movies, radio, television, sports events and newspapers ceased to function for only four weeks. With these main avenues of escape closed, what would be the consequences for people thrown back on their own resources? I have no doubt that even in this short time thousands of nervous breakdowns would occur, and many more thousands of people would be thrown into a state of acute anxiety, not different from the picture which is diagnosed clinically as neurosis.²

Indeed, upon occasion even the most acquiescent citizen of the "secular city" experiences at least some pangs of conscience. Invariably, if infrequently, he too feels the stark reality of life in (what he believes to be) a value-less, purposeless universe. These fleeting moments of anxiety usually occur when modern man is denied recourse to the tranquilizing amusements of society. It is then that Durkheim's *anomie* begins to emerge from where it usually lies, semi-dormant, just beneath the conscious mind of materially satiated man. Albert Camus, writing in *The Myth of Sisyphus*, describes the nature of these passing minutes of spiritual torment:

It happens that the stage-set collapses. Rising, street car, four hours of work, meal, sleep and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm — this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the "why" arises and everything else begins in that weariness tinged with amazement.³

It is just then, when the "why" of one's existence emerges from the depths, that many twentieth century-ites begin to sense the bankruptcy of our secular technocratic society. At times, they may

even start to suffer from somewhat extended periods of Fromm's acute anxiety. This comes about when they painfully confront the fact that their lives are devoid of both rhyme and reason. In response to these emotional agonies, ever increasing numbers of people are at present trying to "find themselves," via the plethora of "final systems," periodically being advanced by the current flood of "psychology," "self-help," best-selling books. These individuals have turned to a wide assortment of hucksters, each offering to heal all the ills of contemporary mankind by teaching people how to, alternatively, "transact," "play games," "say no," "find freedom" and so on. Not surprisingly, however, having learned to "be adult," "drop our defenses," "fog," and even having mastered the supposedly difficult art of "selfishness"(!) have in no way aided us in discovering a solution to the primary dilemma of our time: the riddle of the purpose of our being. Instead, these cadres of psychologically "born-again" individuals run about, each claiming to have found total happiness by "rationally emoting," "sending body signs" or some similar superficial nonsense. These people would be humorous in a sad way, if their state of euphoria would be at all long-lasting. Unfortunately, most of the "self-improvers" are habitual recidivists. Today they are hooked on Sun Moon's "joy," tomorrow on Randian "epistemology," and the next day on Dr. Reuben's amorality. One is reminded of the sad conversation in Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*, in which the two lead characters, the pitiful tramps Vladimir and Estragon, engage in the following dialogue:

VLADIMIR: Say you are [happy], even if it's not true.

ESTRAGON: I am happy.

VLADIMIR: So am I.

ESTRAGON: So am I.

VLADIMIR: We are happy.

ESTRAGON: We are happy. (Silence) What do we do, now that we are happy?⁴

In fact, though, despite his outward happiness, modern man pro-

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claims, day in and day out, whether known or unknown to himself, the sad cry of T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men":

We are the hollow men
 We are the stuffed men
 Leaning together
 Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!...
 Shape without form, shade without colour,
 Paralyzed force, gesture without motion.⁵

An especially astute diagnosis of our modern malady can be found in the writings of one who not only described it, but actually experienced it to the utmost: Franz Kafka. This tormented Czechoslovakian Jew's literary genius penetrated the outward posturing of twentieth-century living. Kafka openly expressed the absurdity and terror of man bewildered by a Godless universe. Never having been exposed to the truths of his own faith, Kafka stayed up nights in his one-room flat in Prague and penned vivid allegories describing the senselessness and dread of non-believing humanity. The aimlessness of an increasingly secularized world was a constant theme of his works. In description of our unique historical circumstances he wrote:

From our sullied point of view, we are in the situation of travelers on a train who have been held back in a long tunnel by an accident; the tunnel has a section in which the light from the entrance is no longer visible and the light from the exit so tiny that it must constantly be sought out, only to be lost from sight; during all this time both the entrance and the exit are uncertain.⁶

Kafka himself could never quite come to peace with his own rejection of Judaism. Max Brod in his biography of the Prague genius tells of Kafka's comments after participating in the third Sabbath meal at "the house of a miracle-working rabbi, a refugee from Galicia":

Franz, whom I took with me to a "third meal" at the close of the Sabbath, with its whisperings and chasidic chants,

remained, I must admit, very cool. He was undoubtedly moved by the age-old sounds of an ancient folk life, but on the way home he said, "If you look at it properly, it was just as if we had been among a tribe of African savages. Sheerest superstition."⁷

However, despite his outward dismissal of the "faith of Israel," Kafka was actually tormented by misgivings. In his diary the following cryptic entry is to be found:

January 23 [1922] A feeling of fretfulness again. From what did it arise? From certain thoughts which are quickly forgotten but leave my fretfulness behind. Sooner than the thoughts themselves I could list the places in which they occurred to me: one, for example, on the little path that passes the Altneu synagogue.⁸

Actually, a mere two days after his visit to the chasidic rabbi and his outwardly nonchalant reaction to it, Kafka recorded the following troubled thoughts in his diary which betray his verbal rejection of the Torah faith:

The Polish Jews going to Kol Nidre. The little boy with prayer shawls under both arms, running along at his father's side. Suicidal not to go to temple.⁹

So, despite his outward posturing, Kafka felt the emptiness which all of God-less humanity inevitably feels. In typical parable style he illuminated both his own and mankind's dilemma:

I had fallen into an inextricable bush. I shouted as loudly as I could for the keeper of the park. He came running, but he could not reach me.

"How did you manage to get yourself in there?" he shouted. "Get yourself out the same way!"

"Impossible," I answered, "there is no way. I was walking along calmly, lost in thought, and suddenly here I am! As if the bush had grown up around me. I'll never get out, I'm lost!"

"Child," said the keeper. "You begin by taking a forbidden road, you get into this terrible bush and you complain..."¹⁰

In a similar vein, is a powerful and some sense of identity, an individual with a strange "mission," but mysterious mayor of the village that his entire quest to failure from its

All those coming your ignorance real... Their central exchange

This then, is the of the modern Jew, man without God "his contacts... have any "central exchange" his "calling" superficial air of something century agonized whether or not his meaning.

It was not always God." Until a man the *angst* which so generations of Jews work of the "essence of modern Jews' feelings. Possessing, as they God, who had revealed occurrence at Mount the psychological known as the Torah

In a similar vein, in his classic allegory, *The Castle*, Kafka offers a powerful and poignant portrayal of our modern yearning for some sense of identity and reality. In that work, the central character, an individual known only as "K," seeks to establish contact with a strange "castle," located beyond the realm of communication, but mysteriously somewhere close at hand. In the end, the mayor of the village near the "castle" summons "K" to inform him that his entire quest has been in vain. His effort has been doomed to failure from its inception. The mayor explains that:

All those contacts of yours have been illusory, but because of your ignorance of the circumstances you take them to be real. . . . There's no fixed connection with the castle, no central exchange that transmits our calls further.¹¹

This then, is the central anxiety of modern man, in general, and of the modern Jew, in particular. Having taken a "forbidden road," man without God no longer has any means of knowing whether "his contacts . . . have been illusory," no way of ascertaining whether any "central exchange" really exists that is capable of "transmitting" his "calls further." Going about his daily tasks with a superficial air of serenity, the Jew of the last quarter of the twentieth century agonizes in his "heart of hearts" over the question of whether or not his life contains any actual significance, any ultimate meaning.

It was not always thus with the Jewish people, the "seekers of God." Until a mere two hundred years ago, Jews did not experience the *angst* which so personifies contemporary existence. Earlier generations of Jews would have found puzzling our "learned" definitions of the "essence of Judaism" and they would have regarded the modern Jews' feelings of perplexity as needlessly self-inflicted. Possessing, as they did, a firm belief in a merciful, transcendent God, who had revealed His will to mankind in a supra-historical occurrence at Mount Sinai, Jews of previous periods did not feel the psychological tortures of our rootless age. This Divine Will, known as the Torah, was constantly adhered to by the Jewish

people from the time of its promulgation up until the most recent present. Its laws were diligently observed by Jews everywhere under all circumstances in a spirit of that joyous self-sacrifice which only a sense of faith can produce. The scorn, ridicule and persecution of a hostile world never weakened the ties which bound the "children of Israel" to their God. Neither Ahasuerus or Herod, neither Hitler or Stalin ever succeeded in deterring the Jewish people from their loyalty to God and His Torah. From Sinai to Jerusalem, from Sura to Fez, from Cordoba to Frankfort and from Pinsk to New York, this God-given Torah was a source of unity and stability to a people whose material fortunes were at times quite precarious. Above all, however, it was a source of the truth. The obvious fact is that there has never been any satisfactory answer to the "essence of Judaism" question, except the most readily available answer: that Judaism is a religious faith with doctrines and laws. Mr. Glazer's previously mentioned, seemingly mysterious "ties which bind" Jews together are no more and no less than those of the Divine Covenant which the Jewish people entered into some four thousand years ago in the Sinai desert. The heretofore described sense of confusion and anxiety prevalent among Jews today is the direct result of their estrangement from the only source of reality known to man: Divine Revelation. The truths of the Torah provide the needed elements of certitude which the Jew yearns for in order to free himself from the torturous grip of what has become for him a senseless universe.

One of the most frightening aspects of the God-less universe is that it fails to provide any ultimate rationale for morality and the pursuit of a goodly existence. We will return to this point later, but for our present purposes, as we attempt to sketch in broad strokes the agony and absurdity of secularism, suffice it to say that in the final analysis there is no way to guarantee the validity and truthfulness of value except via a theological substructure of some sort. In fact, those secular "humanists" who were honest with themselves always expressed their "ethical" systems in practical, utilitarian terms. For example, Baron Paul d'Holbach, a leading eighteenth

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century advocate of atheistic "humanism" (whom we will be meeting in the next chapter in greater detail) summarized his moral system when he wrote:

Ethics would be a useless science if it did not prove to man that his greatest interest is to be virtuous.¹²

The famous François Voltaire, who advocated a deistic ethical construction during most of his public career in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, also wrote:

Virtue and vice, moral good and evil, are therefore, . . . , what is useful . . . to society.¹³

It is a short step from the tepid utilitarian morality of a d'Holbach or a Voltaire to the totally value-free nihilism of their contemporary, the famous Marquis de Sade, who expressed his views thus:

What is man and what difference is there between him and the other animals of the earth? Decidedly none.

. . . it becomes beyond human powers to prove that there can be anything criminal in the destruction of a creature, of whatever age, sex or species.

. . . That is more than enough to convince every enlightened reader that it is impossible for murder ever to outrage nature.¹⁴

Eugene Ionesco vividly describes the complete uselessness of trying to advocate a system of morals to the committed anti-God individual. In his well-known *avant-garde* play, *The Killer*, he has one Berenger plead for his life with a rampaging murderer, who only giggles at the pleas of his pitiful victim. Finally, after having appealed to religion, decency and morality, Berenger is forced to lament:

I don't know what else I can say to you . . . It's possible that the survival of the human species is of no importance so what does it matter if it disappears . . . perhaps the whole universe is no good and you are right to want to blast it all.

To which the anonymous assailant only laughs, whereupon Berenger plays his last card.

You kill without reason, in that case, and I beg you, without reason, I implore you, yes, please stop . . . There's no reason to kill or not to kill. . .¹⁵

In short, only the God-believing man, with his system of eternally valid and eternally true morality, can reasonably employ the words "right" and "wrong." For the non-believer the statement "I want to help humanity" is of the same significance as "I want a chocolate bar." Minus Divine ethics, man is forced into the anarchistic and absurd universe of the positivists, subjectivists, relativists and their ilk. It is not a comforting place. As Albert Camus in *The Rebel* spells out the chaos of value-free life:

. . . The absurd itself is a contradiction. It is a contradiction in its content because in wanting to uphold life it excludes all value judgment. To breathe is to judge. . . The absurdist position, translated into action, is inconceivable. It is equally inconceivable when translated into expression. Simply by being expressed, it gives a minimum of coherence to incoherence, and introduces consequences, where, according to its own tenets, there are none. Speaking itself is restorative. The only coherent attitude based on non-signification would be silence — if silence, in its turn, were not significant. The absurd, in its purest form, attempts to remain dumb. If it finds its voice, it is because it has become complacent.

. . . This complacency is an excellent indication of the profound ambiguity of the absurdist position.¹⁶

However, despite the many philosophical dead-end streets towards which doctrinaire secularism inevitably leads, the vast majority of modern Jews remain apathetically indifferent to the postulates of their faith. Sadly, they seem only dimly interested in acquiring even the most rudimentary knowledge of the basics of Torah belief. Even those Jews who receive some sort of elementary training invariably do so in preparation for their *Bar Mitzvah*, which is

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drummed up to be the salient point of their spiritual lives, and ninety-nine percent of the time it is the end point as well. So, for the most part, the Jewish people nonchalantly remain untouched by either the doctrines or the practices of Judaism. What is the cause of this phlegmatic insensitiveness? Why do the *mitzvot* (commandments) of the Torah fail to stir the soul of the twentieth-century Jew, as they once quickened the hearts of his ancestors? Does the contemporary Jew remain lukewarm to his faith on the basis of an analytical rejection of its claims? Has he carefully weighed the pros and cons of the faith-versus-doubt controversy, and found Torah Judaism to be intellectually lacking? To the neutral observer, such would hardly seem to be the case. The dominant secular aura of our period seems at this juncture in history to be of a socially induced, conditioned character. Ours is not a particularly intellectually, much less theologically, inclined era. The Jew, being a creature of his environment, is inextricably caught up in the habitual unconcern which most moderns exhibit to all things of a spiritual nature. Estranged from his faith as the result of controversies engaged in many years ago, the modern member of the "congregation of Jacob" lives off the dividends of two centuries of non-belief. Rarely does the modern Jew pause to examine his basic premises or to reflect on the sources of his religious alienation. Instead, he numbly glides about, his soul hardened in an imperturbable state of lethargy brought about by historical and cultural forces of which he is only vaguely aware. The modern Jew may best be described as a *dogmatic skeptic*: a man incapable of religious faith, but no longer knowing or even so much as caring to know, the cause of his pronounced disability. This impassive torpor is clearly not the end product of a vehement process of logical reflection or sensitive soul-searching. On the contrary, the contemporary Israelite is frozen in a robot-like stupor and routinely rejects the claims of the Torah faith with an offhandedness typical of the mind which remains smugly impervious to any challenges to its preconceived notions.

As I hope to demonstrate later on in greater detail, the case

for Torah Judaism is far more plausible than those indoctrinated by the "axioms" of twentieth-century "intellectualism" are led to suppose. It would appear that a truly neutral overview of the history of philosophical inquiry should make that apparent. As C. S. Lewis once pointed out:

We know in fact that believers are not cut off from unbelievers by any portentous inferiority of intelligence or any perverse refusal to think. Many of them have been people of powerful minds. Many of them have been scientists. We may suppose them to have been mistaken, but we must suppose that their error was at least plausible.¹⁷

Many modern Jews appear to have forgotten that the principles of their *dogmatic skepticism* have been subjected to many a cogent critique throughout the ages. One's affirmation of "doubt" can easily be as baseless as one's affirmation of faith. As Miguel de Unamuno, that tortured Spanish soul who struggled all his life to *come to terms with his own faith, once lamented:*

... we enter the age of rationalism ... not free of uncertainty. Faith in reason is prone to the same rational indefensibility as any other faith. And we may well say with Robert Browning,

"All we have gained, then, by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith
For one of faith diversified by doubt."¹⁸

This culturally sustained and historically evolved religious complacency of the modern Jew would seem to be the greatest obstacle standing in the way of his attempting a re-evaluation of the Torah faith. The story is told of a young Russian Jew of the eighteenth century who had recently abandoned his faith under the influence of some "free-thinker" who had visited his small village. Supremely confident in his newly acquired skepticism, he set out to confront the learned Rabbi, Levi Yitzchak (1740-1810), spiritual leader of the Jewish community of that Ukrainian Jewish center, Berdichev. Upon arriving there, he paused not even to eat or rest, but pro-

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ceeded immediately upon his arrival to see the Rabbi. Entering the synagogue, he made his way forthwith to the Rabbi's study, where the aged saint sat, immersed in study. The young man hesitated for a moment and just as he was about to begin to speak, the Berditchever's* voice, barely audible, was heard. "Perhaps," Rabbi Levi Yitzchak began, his gaze fixed on the Talmudic tome which lay before him, "...just perhaps *it* is true... perhaps *it* is true after all..." The emotional impact of the moment totally shattered the young man's cocky composure.** He re-investigated his premises and eventually returned to the Torah fold.

It is only in this mood of an aspiring open-mindedness, of "perhaps it is true," that the modern Jew can hope to reappraise his faith. Admittedly, it is no easy task to cast aside the neat and tidy wisdoms of conventionality which happen to be in the vogue, but it is the only way to deal with basic questions. To carefully weigh the ingrained assumptions of one's life is never a particularly comforting endeavor. It can often be a soul-searing experience, but it is the moral obligation of any Jew who wishes to penetrate beyond the stereotyped, stock assumptions of our secular era. As Søren Kierkegaard writes,

To venture causes anxiety, but not to venture is to lose one's self... and to venture in the highest sense is precisely to become conscious of one's self.

To the Jew, bold of heart, who is well aware that "above all, to thine one self be true," a clear re-examination of the hackneyed dogmas of non-belief, coupled with a rigorous investigation of the Berditchever's "perhaps," is of the utmost necessity.

The chapters to follow will attempt to be of some assistance in this process of re-exploration. We will examine the various forces

*Chasidic leaders are frequently referred to by the names of their towns.

**I employ the phrase "emotional impact" with some hesitancy here for, strange as it may seem to the committed secularist, there are, in fact, occasions when God allows saints to perform acts of an extra-naturalistic sort. This story could well have been a case in point.

afoot in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which led to the eventual alienation of the majority of European and American Jews. The modern Jew is only faintly cognizant of the decisive influence which the numerous secular ideologies of the past two hundred years have had on his own spiritual make-up. It has been seen in recent decades that when the modern Jew is shown that the distinctly anti-religious climate in which he moves is the direct result of various systems of thought, each of them suspect in innumerable ways, then he is usually quite willing to seriously entertain the case for the Berditchever's "perhaps."

A cautionary note: there is one modern foolishness which has wrought great damage in our age — it is the self-defeating assertion that truth of any sort must remain forever inaccessible to the human mind. Now, besides being an inherent contradiction [for if certainty be unreachable, how can one be certain of its unreachability?], it just about calls our current inquiry to a halt before we even begin. If truth is eternally beyond the realm of understanding, we may as well abandon our search for some sense of meaningfulness and retire forthwith to a life of endless hedonism. If reality is totally impenetrable, if all questions are perpetually to be regarded as "open questions," then life beyond the merely materialistic is completely baseless. If the human race is incapable of establishing in a conclusive manner a philosophy competent to distinguish in decidedly final terms between the relative value of the life of Moses as opposed to that of Julius Streicher, then all of human endeavor is reduced to the level of non-sentient being, of "sound and fury, a tale told by an idiot." This nihilistic approach to life has been greatly popularized in recent decades by various materialistic reductionists. These relativists insist that all moral and ethical ideals are simply a matter of individual taste. They conclude, therefore, that all men are free to choose between the conflicting claims of amorality, immorality and morality, in much the same manner as they pick out a pair of pants at the store. The late Professor Leo Strauss once described this confusing and damaging point of view:

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...we can be or become wise in all matters of secondary importance, but we have to be resigned to utter ignorance in the most important respect: we cannot have any knowledge regarding the ultimate principles of our choices, i.e. regarding their soundness or unsoundness: our ultimate principles have no other support than our arbitrary and blind preferences. We are then in the position of beings who are sane and sober when engaged in trivial business and who gamble like madmen when confronted with serious issues — retail sanity and wholesale madness.¹⁹

Indeed, many of these proponents of life to be lived in a value vacuum at times even tell us that the simple fact of our own being is an open question and that reality may be a fantasy. G. K. Chesterton once humorously described the strange world of these relativist-subjectivist "philosophers" when he wrote:

We may say that the most characteristic current philosophies have not only a touch of mania, but a touch of suicidal mania. The mere questioner has knocked his head against the limits of human thought; and cracked it... It has no more questions to ask; it has questioned itself. You cannot call up any wilder vision than a city in which men ask themselves if they have any selves.... We have no more questions left to ask. We have looked for questions in the darkest corners and on the highest peaks. We have found all the questions that can be found. It is time we gave up looking for questions and started looking for answers.²⁰

We shall return to the apostles of ethical neutrality and non-existence a bit later, but for the meantime I will assume that the average reader finds himself, the world and the search for ultimate truth to be actualities, not dreams of his imagination. As Ortega y Gasset once wrote:

...belief in truth is a deeply rooted foundation in human life; if we remove it, life is reduced to an illusion and an absurdity...

On the assumption that Ortega's comment reflects the feelings of most people, we can now safely state: For the Jew, to accept or reject the validity of the Torah is *the most important decision* to be reached in his lifetime. If the faith of Israel is true, then the Jew automatically becomes obligated to observe the ordinances of the Divine revelation. If not, then the "sons of Jacob" must seek a *raison d'être* for their existence outside the "house of their fathers" and without God. To deny the Torah is to deny the only conceivable reason for continued Jewish existence. To affirm the Torah is to affirm Judaism in the only way possible to affirm it, as the authentic record of the encounter of the Jews with God. As Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, a staunch defender of Torah Judaism in the hostile environment of nineteenth-century Germany, once wrote:

Let us not deceive ourselves. The whole question is simply this. Is the statement, "And God spoke to Moses saying..." true or not true? ... If this is to be no mere... rhetorical flourish, then we must keep and carry out this Torah without omission... in all circumstances and at all times...²¹

As William James pointed out, neutrality in matters of faith is a total impossibility. Life is a series of constant choices, of continual options. One may claim to maintain a wait-and-see stance on issues of religious import, but in fact, in hundreds of daily situations, we must act in accordance with either the dictates of belief or those of atheism. This is especially true in the case of Judaism, where in one's day-to-day, routine existence there are many laws and regulations to be fulfilled. Either one observes the laws of the Torah, or one does not. It is as simple as that. There is no convenient middle ground of impartiality, no half-way house of lukewarm accommodation. Either the Jew says yes to God, or no to Him. The poet Edwin Markham once brought out this alternative in stark perspective when he depicted God as saying:

I will leave man to make the fateful guess,
Will leave him torn between No and Yes;
Leave him in tragic loneliness to choose.
With all in life to win and all to lose.²²

Two final words... although... fulness of... much more... of life involve... the Jewish... corded the... Torah system... tral requirements... advantageous... Back to avail... of the more... saying "seeing... applied to... degree, more... meaning of... the life with... there." So, an... intellectually...

Secondly... believers, is... mitzvot... Jews is... munity, through... to engage in... People with... So it is with... strictures. They... of their life... attempting... to a... home of a... assuredly... seeks to... And now...

Two final words and we can get on to the heart of things. First, although *The Road Back* is essentially a demonstration of the truthfulness of the Torah and its doctrines, Judaism itself represents much more than a dry set of intellectual convictions. It is a way of life involving one's actions, words and thoughts, to be lived by the Jewish nation. One cannot overemphasize the importance accorded the fulfillment of the *mitzvot* (commandments) in the Torah system. The performance of the Divine precepts is the central requirement of Torah Judaism. Therefore, it would be highly advantageous for anyone even remotely interested in *The Road Back* to avail himself of the fifth chapter of this work, where some of the more significant *mitzvot* are described in detail. The old saying "seeing is believing" could perhaps be rephrased when applied to Judaism. "Doing is believing" would seem, to a certain degree, more appropriate. It is somewhat difficult to discuss the meaning of Sabbath observance, prayer, holidays, dietary laws and the life with one who, to use the colloquialism, "just hasn't been there." So, as a suggestion, while examining the case for Judaism intellectually, the reader might try to experience it in his daily life.

Secondly, the importance of community, of a community of believers, is a key part of the Torah doctrine. For example, some *mitzvot* are only to be performed when a religious quorum of ten Jews is present. Beyond the ritual aspects of the demands of community, though, there is the deep-seated need of every human being to engage in life's undertakings in the company of his fellow-man. People with similar interests invariably associate with one another. So it is with those Jews who seriously seek to live up to the Torah's strictures. They usually congregate when fulfilling the central task of their life: the observance of the Jewish faith. Therefore, anyone attempting to probe Judaism would do well to see it "live." A visit to a Torah-oriented synagogue, day school, yeshiva or even the home of a religiously observant acquaintance or relative will most assuredly open up new vistas and horizons for the reader who seeks to reappraise the truths of his faith.

And now, without further delay: *The Road Back*.

II HO

PART ON

*The fatal year
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*I tell you no
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II HOW DID WE GET HERE?

PART ONE

The fatal year is 1789, and the symbol of inequity is the Jacobin Cap.... The issue is between man created in the image of God and the termite in a human guise.

ERIK VON KUEHNELT-LEDDIHN (1909-),
Leftism

*I tell you nought for your comfort,
Yea, nought for your desire,
Save that the sky grows darker yet,
And the sea rises higher.*

G. K. CHESTERTON (1874-1936)
The Ballad of the White Horse

The poison was brewed in these West lands but it has spit itself everywhere by now. However far you went you would find the machines, the crowded cities, the empty thrones, the false writings, the barren beds; men maddened with false promises and soured with true miseries, worshipping the iron works of

*their own hands, cut off from Earth their mother and their
Father in Heaven. . . . The shadow of one dark wing is over
all Tellus.*

C. S. LEWIS (1898–1963)

Perelandra

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It would be a quite presumptuous undertaking to attempt to encompass the major events of any historical period in the limited space of half a chapter. This is especially so in the case of the period which concerns us — the Enlightenment. It was an age which fundamentally and, perhaps, even irreversibly altered the course of Western history. Nevertheless it is an endeavor of the utmost necessity. It would be a venture in futility to seek to understand the plague of religious apathy which currently envelops the "community of Israel" without previously attempting to unearth its roots. Therefore, in the following pages we will endeavor to identify those forces which so significantly changed the direction of Jewish history.

As pointed out earlier, the lack of belief in Torah principles prevalent among the contemporary descendants of those 2,000,000-odd Jews who stood at the base of Mount Sinai is not a recent development. Basically, modern Jews have merely inherited a posture of disinterested, semi-cognizant skepticism from their immediate predecessors—from those Jews who actually made the decisive move away from the "faith of their fathers." The actual abandonment of Torah belief occurred in an earlier era, whose conclusions are accepted with what could almost be described as "simple faith" by our present age. Rare indeed is the twentieth-century Jew who has carefully examined the Torah-based philosophy of, for example, Rabbi Moses Maimonides. Much rarer still would be the modern Jew who has even quite so much as heard

the names of such significant and powerful Torah advocates as Rabbi Yehuda haLevi or Rabbi Bachya ibn Pakuda, much less considered the persuasiveness of their major works.

The indifference to faith among modern Jews is the result of a massive conditioning process. Various historical currents, combined, of course, with the documented strength of peer-group pressures to conform (so powerful in our society), have led the twentieth-century Jew to his nonchalant stance on Judaism. The "spirit of the age" reigns supreme in our materially affluent but intellectually slothful epoch. Ortega y Gasset once remarked that our time is dominated by "those who want to march through life together, along the collective path, shoulder to shoulder, wool rubbing wool and head down." Modern Jews go about the routines and rituals of a totally secularized life impervious to their own dogmatic slumber. Caught up by the forces of this virtually omnipotent *Zeitgeist*, the Jew is virtually incapable of becoming a *true skeptic* and challenging the prevailing climate of thought. Our unique age exerts a vast, almost totalitarian influence on the minds of its citizens, squelching individual thoughts which happen to contradict the firmly entrenched ideologies of the media, the academy, the political forum and the like. As the late Albert Jay Nock, the individualist *par excellence* and ever the village heretic throughout his stormy career in the pre-war public forum of America, once lamented:

The worst thing I see about life at the present time is that whereas the ability to think has to be cultivated by practice, like the ability to dance or to play the violin, everything is against that practice. Speed is against it, commercial amusements, noise, the pressure of mechanical diversions, reading habits, even studies are against it. Hence a whole race is bred without the power to think, or even the disposition to think, and one cannot wonder that public opinion, qua opinion, does not exist.¹

Without so much as a whimper the modern Jew continues to imbibe the prevailing clichés of our time on issues central to his life. In so doing, he is, to use the colloquialism, "taking a cop-out" on

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the most important questions that he will ever confront in his lifetime: Does God really exist? Is the Torah true? What does it mean to be Jewish? Does "being Jewish" obligate anything? etc. These and similar questions are, for the most part, never asked. However, should they be raised, they are invariably not answered.² Indeed, the situation is very puzzling. For thousands of years, the greatest philosophers and most sophisticated minds of mankind considered the Sinaitic event of revelation a "history-shattering" occurrence. It was, therefore, thought to be eternally relevant to the human situation. Even in our own post-Cartesian, post-Kantian, post-Darwinian era, many thinkers still adhere to such a view, much to the surprise of their detractors. It would certainly seem that the existence of God, the historical validity of revelation and other related subjects should rank high on the agenda of topics which serious and rational men should consider. This is especially true in the case of the Jew, to whom the Torah represents *the only* supra-temporal source of Divine truth. Yet, despite all this, the questions remain unasked and the answers ungiven.

Instead, the modern Jew estranged from his faith continues along in his culturally-induced apathy and remains ever reluctant to search for the bases of his mass-crowd "skepticism." The noted psychologist C. G. Jung perceived quite clearly this tendency of our age to breed herd-like dogmatism. In his book *The Undiscovered Self*, he described the alluring character of following *only* those ideologies which have been "sanctioned" by society:

Where the many are, there is security; what the many believe must of course be true; what the many want must be worth striving for, and necessary and therefore good. In the clamor of the many there lies the power to snatch wish-fulfillment by force; sweetest of all, however, is that gentle and painless slipping back into the kingdom of childhood, into the paradise of parental care, into happy-go-luckiness and irresponsibility ... to all questions there is an answer. ...³

It is no facile task to clear away the deeply encrusted cobwebs of "knee-jerk" attitudes and opinions. However, it is just such a

difficult enterprise that we must now begin. In order to do so, we must first return to what is now a long since bygone era in history, to the proverbial "days of yesterday year." We must return to an age which is separated from our own not so much by a cleavage in time as by one of thought: a time in which Western man believed in God and followed the dictates of traditional faith. By examining these theocentric centuries, we will be far better equipped to reconsider our own extremely potent historical biases. The telling influence of the habitually-held stereotypes of twentieth-century secularism are spelled out by historian Crane Brinton in his book *A Decade of Revolution, 1789-1799*:

We have all of us today been so much affected by this abandonment of [religious faith], we are all of us such good children of the eighteenth century, that only by a difficult leap of the imagination can we live again for a moment in the old world of ideas...⁴

Despite the difficulties involved, we must venture just such a "leap of the imagination." Only by first understanding the nature of the "age of faith" can we hope to fathom the causes of its disintegration.

European civilization of merely three centuries back was permeated by an acute sense of the proximity of God and a stark realization of the obligatory nature of His demands on men. Both Jew and non-Jew, despite their many times of fierce hostility towards one another, were united by their belief in a Creator, a revelation and a final judgment of some sort. The world was viewed as the scene of an ongoing struggle to obtain a semblance (albeit ever imperfect) of submission to the Will of God, amidst the vicissitudes of temporal life. In short, Western man gave near-unanimous assent to the metaphysical truths of traditional faith. Writing of pre-Enlightenment European "Christendom," the noted world historian Will Durant offers the following comments on the driving force of the Middle Ages. He speaks of humanity of that era as being "God-intoxicated" and continues:

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Nothing is more moving in medieval history than the omnipresence, almost at times the omnipotence of religion...⁵

In the case of pre-eighteenth-century Jewry, Durant describes the situation in a similar vein:

...religion stood as a spiritual policeman over every phase of the moral code...the medieval Jew accepted the Law...he honored it as the way home and the school of his youth, the vital medium of his life.⁶

Many modern Jews are under the impression that Jewish life prior to the nineteenth century was a sorrowful and stunted affair. This misconception was for the most part created by Jewish historians of the early Enlightenment period, whose own anti-religious bias caused them to manipulate history to their own ends.⁷ The theory of these polemicists seems to be that a people is incapable of functioning in a self-fulfilling manner when it is deprived of the outward comforts of statehood, material prosperity and the like. It is indeed true that medieval Jews were subjected to violent anti-semitism and physical degradation. Inquisitors and crusaders slaughtered Jews, numerous countries expelled them or incarcerated them in ghettos, while the general populace periodically exploded against them in the frenzy of pogroms.⁸ However, despite the hostility of the gentile community, despite the abject material poverty which typified their existence, the Jews of the Middle Ages prospered spiritually. The late English historian Paul Goodman of the Royal Historical Society in London describes the condition of Jewish life in medieval times in his widely acclaimed work *The History of the Jews*:

...far from feeling degraded the medieval Jews certainly considered themselves superior to their surroundings. They were in conscious possession of a faith which excluded all miracle mongering, relic and image worship, and most other forms of active superstition; they represented a moral standard which eschewed the bloodshed and inhuman cruelties that tainted their neighbors; they upheld a pure and affection-

ate family life which won over the unwilling admiration of their enemies; they formed a voluntary brotherhood which knew of no serf or slave; they represented a culture of acknowledged grandeur which reached back a thousand years before their adversaries were heard of; in an age when many of the highest dignitaries and even princes could hardly write their names, the Jews employed a system of universal education. . . . Added to all these considerations, religious emotion of the purest and most exalted type quickened the self-consciousness of the Jews, steeled their patient endurance, and stirred them into heroic resolve, such as, in their intensity and duration, stand unparalleled in the experience of mankind.

. . . The strength and resistance and cohesion was furnished by the high idealism, which, in spite of all outward sordidness, necessarily pervaded the thoughts of the Jew. . . . The Jew was a sober, industrious and sexually moral man in his daily affairs. . . .⁹

The so-called "experts" of sociology and its cause-and-effect processes have never failed to marvel over the survival of the seemingly indestructible Jewish people through the long night of medieval persecution. Frederick Schweitzer, writing in his work *A History of the Jews*, points out the source of this surprising fact of an "everlasting people":

. . . the greatest achievement of Medieval Jews . . . was that they endured as a people practicing the ancient religion. In so doing they were defying every normal expectation. . . . What nurtured and sustained that faith was a remarkable system of education in Bible and Talmud.¹⁰

Howard M. Sachar elaborated on this point, in his work *The Course of Modern Jewish History*, as he examines the life of Russian Jewry during the pre-modern period:

Because knowledge of the Talmud was considered the supreme attainment . . . not only the *yeshiva bocher* but virtually every male Jew studied its writings at one time or another

in his life. In fact, it was not uncommon for the most practical-minded businessman to spend a few hours weekly at the synagogue after evening services to join in study. If there was such a thing as a typical melody in the Pale of Settlement, it was soft crooning of voices intoning the Talmudic text, as heads and bodies rocked back and forth over the precious script. Where else but in the Pale were scholars the princes of the community, prized far above the richest of men? ...¹¹

Goodman also points to Torah study as the driving force which sustained the Jewish nation as it struggled through some of its worst experiences in the Diaspora:

In the darkest ignorance of the Dark Ages, study was regarded by the Jews as a religious duty second to none... To the Jew of the Middle Ages, the highest ambition and ideal was — not to be rich, but to be counted among the learned in the community. Ignorance was a disgrace, for it was only the scholar who commanded true respect... The sharpening of the mind by the dialectics and arguments in which the Talmud, the chief object of Jewish study, abounds, produced a zest for knowledge, that quick capacity which the Jews were able to show when, after many centuries of stunted growth, they were afforded some fair measure of opportunity.¹²

Besides Torah study, the Talmud had taught the Jew to engage in “prayer and acts of loving-kindness.” The religiosity of the medieval Jew was by not means confined to scholarly pursuits. It manifested itself in a system of communal charity and relief besides which our own modern “welfare states” pale in comparison. As Goodman writes:

...the medieval Jews were distinguished by a wide and generous benevolence by which no son of the Covenant was considered an outcast. There was no circumstance in life which was not provided for by an all-embracing charity. Great care was taken to render this charity... free from taint of humiliation, and even the Jewish beggar, especially if he presumed

on some learning, assumed a demeanor which made it clear to the donor that his was the privilege to give what may be justly demanded of him. Everywhere the fugitive Jew found a welcome at the table of a somewhat more favorably situated co-religionist, a welcome not as a poor stranger, but as a guest; the Jew sold as a slave could rely on being ransomed by his brother-in-faith. Like every good deed, personal service to the community was considered a divine commandment.¹³

In addition to study and good works, the pre-Enlightenment Jew had an almost historically unique I-Thou relationship with his God. He prayed to God, sang to Him, danced to Him and cried to Him. All this was done in a spirit of *joyful piety*. The faith of the medieval Jew was not the hell-fire and brimstone affair of the Bible-Belt fundamentalist or the pursed-lipped asceticism of the New England Puritan. It was a religion of spiritual communion with God pervaded by the sense of the Psalmist's exhortation to "serve the Lord in joy, go before Him in song."¹⁴ Sachar writes:

...for all the absence of decorum...the Jews in the synagogue prayed deeply, devoutly, emotionally, emptying their hearts to God in thankfulness....¹⁵

...Far from exacerbating the hardships of life, the Pale's tenacious religious situation was the principle source of consolation, even of recreation. In the Jewish world...all life flowed within the estuaries of the religious experience; and joy was part of it.¹⁶

These then are the two central points upon which all observers of medieval Jewry seem to be agreed: (1) that pre-Emancipation Jews were devoutly religious, happily so; and (2) this joyful piety was the prime reason for the Jews' strange obstinacy in preserving their status as a people. Yet today, some two hundred years later, all of this has profoundly changed. Clearly, to use Durant's apt phrase, Judaism is no longer "the vital medium of life" for the majority of "Abraham's seed" in the twentieth century. The Jew is no longer serene in his faith, but puzzled about his relation to it. He is no

longer immune to the onslaughts of assimilation, but is on the contrary easily swayed by the forces of cultural conformity.

Of course, the rapid decline of traditional faith has not been limited to the Jewish people alone. To paraphrase Hilaire Belloc's famous remark about Catholicism, we may safely say that the faith is no longer Europe and Europe is no longer the faith. No longer do Hapsburgs and Bourbons rule over their people in a stable and harmonious fusion of church and state. The masses of Europe, with the exception of certain rural regions,¹⁷ have followed the lead of their intellectuals down the path of increased secularization since the revolutions of 1848.

The reasons behind this speedy change in mankind's metaphysical assumptions are manifold. In the world of thought prior to the eighteenth century there had been some inklings of what was to come. Many historians trace the anti-religious revolt which exploded in France during the seventeen-hundreds to the Protestant Reformation, or alternatively to the Renaissance. Other scholars go back as far as the thirteenth century and point to the utopian neo-gnosticism of Joachim of Flora, or to the original Gnostics at the end of the Roman Empire. The shaky compromise between materialism and Catholicism of Descartes as extended by Left-Cartesians was assuredly another important intellectual factor contributing to humanity's eventual rejection of God. Amoralism as preached by the likes of Hobbes and Machiavelli also contributed a great deal to the erosion of European faith. Still others would claim that the various denials of a transcendent God which exploded in the eighteenth century are ever-present in the human situation and ever-recurring, albeit in different philosophical forms and symbols throughout history.

However diversified the background of the situation may be, though, there seems to be little disagreement among historians that the *actual bridge* over which the majority of believing Christians and Jews passed from a theocentric view of reality to the confines of the Secular City was constructed in eighteenth-century France by the famous *philosophes* and their numerous disciples. The prime

place of these men in the history of Europe's defection from traditional faith cannot be denied. It was essentially through the works of the French "men of reason" that ideological shock waves of a materialistic bent were carried out of France, eventually to profoundly weaken the faith of Germany and later the rest of Europe. In the case of the Jews it was in Germany that the basic tenets of Judaism were first questioned on a large scale and it was from the strongholds of Jewish heresy in Hamburg, Frankfort-on-the-Main and elsewhere that the ideals of the French Enlightenment and the German *Aufklärung* were exported to the prime bastions of Jewish faith in Eastern Europe. There, particularly in Galicia, Lithuania and the Ukraine, the secularism of the eighteenth century was recast in Jewish coating and manifested itself in such anti-religious ideologies as Autonomism, secular Zionism, Bundism, Socialism, Nihilism and so on. As Carl Becker, noted student of that crucial period in European history, wrote:

In those days... God was on trial. The affair was nothing less than a *cause célèbre* of the age...¹⁸

There can be little doubt as to the eventual verdict which Europe handed down on this "trial." The once unanimously held faith of both Christian and Jew was cut to pieces by the slashing rhetoric of such Enlightenment luminaries as Voltaire, d'Alembert, Diderot and d'Holbach. Alexis de Tocqueville wrote in 1856 of the "universal discredit [into] which all religious faith fell at the end of the eighteenth century." In 1770 the *avocat général* of France, Séguier, wrote:

The *philosophes*'... purpose was to change public opinion on... religious institutions, and that revolution has... been effected. History and poetry, romances and even dictionaries have been infected with the poison of incredulity. Their writings are hardly published before they inundate the provinces like a torrent.¹⁹

Let us now turn to examine those areas of Enlightenment philosophy which relate to traditional religious faith in general and to the

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Jewish faith in particular. It is important, however, for the reader to keep in mind several practical considerations before going on: 1) The *philosophes*, despite their almost total unanimity in their opposition to organized religion, did in actuality differ on many minor points. However, in the opinion of many of the leading students of the period such as Peter Gay, Crane Brinton and Ernst Cassirer, for example, the Enlightenment developed in intellectual stages, beginning with a cautious and polite skepticism, proceeding to an anti-religious Deism as personified by Voltaire and culminating in the outspoken atheism of a d'Holbach or a Diderot.²⁰ Therefore, in terms of cumulative *historical effect*, the revolt against the doctrines of "believing Europe" was a unified whole and it will be so treated in the following pages. 2) We will not be discussing the political or economic doctrines with which the *philosophes* are generally associated. The truth or falsehood of such theories as representative government, tolerance, pluralism, economic equality and the like is not pertinent to the subject of this book: Judaism and its relation to the modern Jew. 3) The case for Torah Judaism will not be presented until the chapter following this one. For the moment, all that is asked of the reader is that he should, to a certain extent, begin to view the supposed "paragons of reason," of "skepticism" and of "rationality" with a grain of salt and a hearty dose of *true* skepticism.

Now, before discussing the Enlightenment critique of orthodox faith, it would be helpful if the reader would pause to consider the words of the English historian Edward Gibbon who, though no friend of traditional religion himself, was forced to comment after visiting the Parisian salon of Baron Paul d'Holbach that the professed free-thinkers

... laughed at the cautious skepticism of Hume, preached the tenets of atheism with the bigotry of dogmatists and damned all believers with ridicule and contempt.²¹

D'Holbach himself, although usually described by historians as an extreme example of the atheistic tendencies of the *philosophes*, was

actually quite typical of the third and final stage of the theoretical development of the "age of reason." Self-styled the "personal enemy of God," the Baron was not only a rabid and violent enemy of religious doctrine, but went so far as to call for the "total destruction" of what he called the "superstition of all ages." In so doing, he anticipated the activist descendants of the Enlightenment, the Jacobin leaders of the Terror of 1793, who persecuted all manifestations of traditional faith with a relentless brutality. The "amiable Baron"—he is so described by his friends—could simply not tolerate the "ferocious and ridiculous superstitions of the Jews,"²² as he referred to both Christian and Jewish doctrines. Therefore, he advocated:

The words *God* and *create*... ought to be stricken from the language!... The friend of mankind cannot be a friend of God... He knows that the happiness of the human race imperiously exacts that the dark, unsteady edifice of superstition shall be razed to its foundation... trod underfoot those chimeras with which the unfortunate are tormented....²³

D'Holbach's intense hatred for all organized religion as it existed in Europe at that time led him, as it did many of his *philosophes* contemporaries, to a position of vehement anti-semitism. After all, they reasoned, it was the Jews who first brought "the scourge" of orthodox monotheism to humanity. On the subject of the "seed of Israel," the Parisian Baron seemingly abandoned his self-proclaimed yearning that "Virtue, Reason and Truth remain forever our *only* divinities," and stooped to the level of the gutter-like rabble-rousing:

In one word, [Moses] made the Hebrews monsters of frenzy and ferocity... [he] animated them with a spirit of destruction... [The Jews are] a nation of robbers, usurpers and murderers... The ferocious and ridiculous superstitions of the Jews rendered them at once the enemies of mankind, and the object of their contempt... Soured by misfortune, they became more blind, fanatic and seditious.²⁴

We have digressed here somewhat to quote from d'Holbach's writ-

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ings in order to illuminate the description which Gibbon gave of the latter *philosophes*. In pursuing the ideologies of the Enlightenment, it is important to remember that most of the "men of reason" who so influenced the climate of European thought were not scholars in any sense of the term. Instead, they were a cross between ideologists and polemicists. As Max Pearson Cushing comments in his otherwise favorable study of d'Holbach, "it cannot be said that he used much historical insight."²⁵ The same could be said for Voltaire and others. This is a very important point for the reader to bear in mind. The "men of reason" succeeded in changing the course of history not so much by the formidableness of their arguments as by the fact that their resentful and bellicose style was found relevant in a Europe which had for centuries been nursing many subconscious grievances against the *ancien regime* and traditional faith.

For the sake of simplicity the Enlightenment critique of religion can roughly be divided into three general areas: (1) the *philosophes* claimed that, historically speaking, religion had always been a detriment to mankind. First, it discouraged true scholarly endeavor and was a prime cause of the supposed "obscurantism" of the Middle Ages. Secondly, by dogmatically postulating the doctrines of religion, it fostered a spirit of intolerance, bigotry and needless hatred. (2) They further asserted that the origins of religious belief were totally fictional. Therefore, they concluded, the Bible was nothing more than a fanciful collection of meaningless legends foisted by cunning priests on gullible primitives. (3) The "men of reason" also considered themselves to be totally "rational" creatures, capable of bringing out the "natural, inherently good" characteristics of man. By employing "scientific" methods the *philosophes* believed that mankind could usher in "a new era of infinite progress," a veritable utopian epoch in which humanity, liberated from the chains of illusory religious beliefs, would live in perfect love and reason forever. In short, they felt themselves capable of radically changing the constitution of man and the reality of the world.

Let us now examine each of these points in greater detail.

(1) The ill effects which religious faith purportedly had upon mankind was a constant theme of the most widely known, although certainly not the profoundest thinker of the *philosophes*, Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire (1694-1778). Religion, accordingly to Voltaire, had consistently been opposed to intellectual progress. Orthodox faith, he claimed, had always been a great foe of any and all civilizing forces in society. The pompous haughtiness of this cocky but popular leader of the Enlightenment comes vividly across in his *Philosophical Dictionary*, where he offers the following preposterous statement as historical fact, in a style typical of the dogmatism of the *philosophes*:

The intellect of Europe has made greater progress in the last one hundred years than in the whole world before, since the days of Brahman and Zoroaster.²⁶

D'Holbach similarly summed up several thousand years of world history when he wrote:

Under the pretence of instructing and enlightening men, religion in reality keeps them in ignorance, it stifles the desires of knowing the most interesting subjects... theology has opposed insurmountable barriers to the progress of true knowledge... By tracing the history of the human mind, we shall easily be convinced that theology has cautiously guarded against its progress.²⁷

This childishly simplistic view of history led Voltaire to coin a fervid phrase, which eventually swept Europe: "*Ecrasez l'infame!*" — "crush the infamous thing" — the "infamous thing" being none other than organized religion. "Live happy and crush the infamous thing," he often wrote to his friends.

As in the case of d'Holbach, Voltaire's conviction that religion was the source of evil throughout European history hardened into a pathological hatred of the Jewish people, from whom the basics of European faith were derived. He viewed the Jews as "a small, new, ignorant, crude people" whose "only science was that of brokerage and usury." In Voltaire's eye, the "children of Israel"

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were the originators of a faith which was "contrary to humanity and hospitality." Unfortunately for humanity, the sage of Ferney often lamented, the Jews were the spiritual ancestors of Europe. The sarcastic Deist wrote:

They [the Jews] keep all their customs, which are exactly the opposite of all proper customs; they were therefore treated as a people opposed to all others, whom they served out of greed and hatred, out of fanaticism; they made usury into a sacred duty. And these are our fathers.²⁸

Now, disregarding for a moment the exaggerated style of these polemics (although they are highly indicative of the *philosophe's* general approach) there is very little that need be said in answer to this first point of the "men of reason." The critique itself, while gaining a certain degree of credibility in the gullible and euphoric days of the late eighteenth century, is, as a statement of historical fact, preposterously ridiculous. Seemingly oblivious to the demands of true scholarship and scientific method, the *philosophes* chose simply to ignore any facts which tended to run contrary to their preconceived dogmas. They prejudged the available evidence on this and similar matters, long before they ever actually examined it. (Indeed, if they ever really did is quite questionable.) As Voltaire's overwhelmingly favorable biographer Gustave Lanson describes the author of *Candide*:

He had an astonishing degree of self-assurance. He would juggle with facts and texts. One could draw up an inexhaustible list of his flippancies, errors, inaccuracies and fantasies. He had none of the careful methods and scrupulous severity of today's scholars. He worked too quickly. He formed snap judgments. He would pontificate on subjects in which his competence was questionable. He was consumed with prejudices and passions. He was an amateur and a journalist.²⁹

Be the foregoing as it may, the fact remains that the judgments of the *philosophes* carried much weight in the eighteenth century and their effects are still strongly felt even in our own era. Many

moderns feel in some vague manner that religion has hindered progress over the centuries, or that religion is somehow opposed to reason, happiness, humanitarianism and the like.

Now, to anyone ever remotely familiar with the history of Western civilization, it is obvious that the truth of the matter happens to be quite different from the wild dogmas of the *philosophes*. Throughout all recorded history it has almost invariably been the doctors of faith, the metaphysicians and the saints, the usages and the mystics, who have brought to mankind the benefits of true scholarship.* It was they who traditionally imparted the wisdoms of science, mathematics, logic, music, philosophy and so on to the masses of men. As Thomas Huxley once remarked:

The scholars of the medieval universities seem to have studied grammar, logic and rhetoric. Thus their work, however imperfect and faulty judged by modern lights it may have been, brought them face to face with all the leading aspects of the many-sided mind of man. For these studies did really contain... what we now call philosophy, mathematical and physical sciences and art. And I doubt if the curriculum of any modern university shows so clear and generous a comprehension of what is meant by culture as the old Trivium and Quadrivium does.³⁰

As a matter of fact, it was not simply a haphazard coincidence which prompted the scholars of the Middle Ages to pursue the

*Our concern at present is with the general credibility of the anti-religious polemics of the *philosophes*. Thus our attention must at this point turn to organized orthodox faith as a whole. The Torah world view, of course, places the Jewish people at the center stage of history with a unique mission to be God's "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." The *philosophes* were, obviously, unaware of this fact of Divine revelation and the election of Israel. Therefore, they tended to concentrate their fire on the non-Jewish faiths which they confronted, and we must answer them on their own ground. By so doing we certainly do not intend to "ecumenically" embrace other faiths (which would be absurd) or to defend either their theoretical or practical constructions. Judaism is not one of many religions. It is the one Godly-ordained faith and cannot be equated with any gentile denominations.

physical and social sciences with such vigor. It was the natural result of their conception of being as the creation of an All-Wise Planner. As Dr Maurice Powicke, Regius Professor of History at Oxford University, pointed out, the theocentric ages

...by maintaining as a practical guide in life the conception of an ordered universe, in which there is a fundamental hierarchy between moral and physical law...turned the faces of the European peoples in the only direction along which social and scientific advance was possible.³¹

The noted scientist Professor A. N. Whitehead, who described the Middle Ages as "one long training of the intellect of Europe in the sense of order," called attention to the source of scholarly endeavor in medieval times:

The greatest contribution of medievalism to the formation of the scientific movement was the inexpugnable belief that every detailed occurrence can be correlated with its antecedents in a perfectly definite manner, exemplifying general principles...modern scientific theory is an unconscious derivative from medieval theology.³²

There is certainly no lack of evidence with which to totally demolish the Enlightenment's caricatures of the Middle Ages and its acquisition of knowledge. The reader interested in further documentation is directed to the notes at the end of this chapter, where several important works which treat of this subject at some length are listed.³³

There is ample evidence that the "age of faith" did, at times, stand in the way of some new discovery, invention or the like, which was later vindicated. However, this reflects absolutely nothing about religious faith *per se*, but a great deal about human nature and established institutions. As George Bernard Shaw once remarked, "Society is founded on intolerance." Most people, especially those of the doctrinal elite of any firmly entrenched viewpoint, are averse to having their preconceptions challenged. This is true in every intellectual discipline, as any scientific inventor or revision-

ist historian could readily testify. Many of the greatest medicinal, anthropological, psychological advances were fiercely opposed and at times violently silenced by the ruling savants of the areas involved. Shaw, ever the skeptical realist, commented further that, "There are glaring cases of the abuse of intolerance; but they are quite as characteristic of our own age as of the Middle Ages."

Robert E. D. Clark clearly summed up the matter when he wrote:

The dilemma is the same for religion as for science. Established religion, as established science, finds new ideas difficult to assimilate, dangerous and revolutionary. Israel persecuted the prophets in ancient times and the Church continued the persecution in the Middle Ages. There is no objective standard by which an established scientific or religious hierarchy can determine which innovators have a valuable message to pass on and which are mere enthusiasts... Inevitably leaders oppose innovators... It is not religion which makes hypocrites of men: any organized system does the same.³⁴

On the whole, then, we can safely say that the *philosophes'* assertions on the historical effects of religion in the area of human knowledge reveal far more of their own biases than of those of the faithful. Indeed, Torah Judaism in particular, like orthodox faith in general, viewed reason and the human mind with the greatest respect. It took the various materialists of the past three centuries with their weird doctrines of total relativism to relegate the thought processes of human beings to the equivalent of the laughing hyenas. In contrast, Jewish theologians have rarely shirked the task of philosophically demonstrating the truths of their faith and presenting them in a coherent fashion. As any student of the history of Jewish thought is keenly aware, the methodical, logical precision and the persuasive argumentation of the great Torah apologists is truly a marvel to behold. From the days of Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon in Babylonia some one thousand years ago and continuing to the present era of such luminaries as Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, both the leaders and masses of the Torah nation have delved into the pro-

fundities of a confused irrationality of revelation, have all been long history.

As to the manifested centuries of *philosophes'* say that we sadly smile at such utopian the activist in the European would have been genocidal in the name of totalitarianism in the twentieth-century. Lenin, Stalin, bigotry, planned humanity, all far outdid the have put the contrasted in the religious communities slaughtered ordered by the In actuality, we have been poor and quite incapable of advance their "Wait," the I.R.A. and in

fundities of their faith with a rigorous logic next to which the confused rantings of the *philosophes* pale in comparison. The rationality of Torah belief, the historical verifiability of the Sinai revelation, the depths and ramifications of the faith experience, have all been fearlessly examined and re-examined throughout the long history of our people.

As to the other charge, that bigotry and hatred supposedly manifested themselves more often during the religion-oriented centuries of mankind, as opposed to the "age of reason" which the *philosophes* thought themselves to be ushering in—suffice it to say that we of the latter half of the twentieth century can only sadly smile at the remarkable optimistic naiveté which inspired such utopian fantasies. In fact the French Revolution, which was the activist fulfillment of the *philosophes'* ideology, unleashed upon the European continent a whole series of barbarian horrors which would have been completely unthinkable under the Bourbons. The genocidal terror of Jacobin France might have been carried out in the name of "liberty, equality and fraternity," but its intolerant totalitarian ruthlessness was in no way mitigated by that fact. We twentieth-century-ites are well aware of Robespierre, Napoleon, Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mao Tse Tung, etc., and all the hatred, bigotry, plunder and slaughter which they managed to bring upon humanity, all without the aid of orthodox faith. Goebbels certainly far outdid Torquemada and the Peking of the Red Guards would have put Calvin's Geneva to shame. Were the barbarities perpetrated in Auschwitz or the fire-bombing of Dresden prompted by religious convictions? Were the twenty million Nationalist Chinese slaughtered by Mao, or the civilian population of My Lai murdered by American soldiers, the victims of a theological crusade? In actuality, almost all the destructive tragedies of recent history have been performed by men dedicated to various secular myths and quite capable of inflicting innumerable inhuman horrors to advance their respective causes.

"Wait," the reader may object at this point. "How about the I.R.A. and its terrorism, or the Falangists in Spain slaughtering

prisoners-of-war, or the pogroms of Russian Orthodox peasants against Jews in Kishinev, Russia, in 1912, or Protestant assaults on Catholics in Baltimore during the Know-Nothingism of the 1840's, and so on. Isn't that list just as long as your catalogue of secularist crimes?"

To which one must reply (like Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady*): a-hah, now you've got it! In truth, cruelty and callousness are pretty much *endemic to the human condition*. As Reinhold Niebuhr writes, "hatred, bigotry and intolerance" are part of a condition that

...is a human, rather than a peculiarly or uniquely religious phenomenon. Both the French and the Russian revolution showed it was easy to do this without benefit of clergy. . . . In both Jacobin and communist fanaticism, "truth" or "reason" or "Marxist-Leninist science" was worshipped as an absolute. . . .³⁵

Perhaps the *philosophes* did have the right at their point in history to dream of or hope for a better day and an improved humanity. What they did not have the right to do, and yet what they consistently persisted in doing, was to indiscriminately attribute inherently human evils to religious sources. On the level of doctrine orthodox faith at least provides a logically viable rationale for rejecting morally perverse means when seeking to achieve commendable ends. Religion, by pointing out the sacredness of human life, gives mankind a coherent philosophy with which to abhor barbarism. All the secularist can muster is some vague and ultimately unjustifiable commitment to do "good." If, indeed, the theocentric centuries failed to fulfill the religious tenets of universal lovingkindness, then the fault lies not in faith itself but in the incongruities of human nature. As Chesterton was wont to comment in relation to his faith, "Religion has not been a historical failure; it simply hasn't been tried yet."

As a matter of digression; I have totally ignored the most obvious *Jewish* answer to accusations of religious intolerance, bigotry, persecution and similar matters. Actually, from a historical view-

point, the Jews or suppression of faith are in this area pursuing such that Jews, civil authority. For discussing same potential its bounds. In with their own remain no more. There is little individuals, be Jews or Christian nonsensical who are committed who are, for all tee against sin beings to that generating the only that "man was

There is, in approach to some tradition includes from the more be said to have modern Jew tolerance there which he would

As an example quote from the the twelfth century following to say co-religionists

point, the Jewish people have rarely engaged in religious exclusion or suppression. Almost all tales of excesses performed in the name of faith are associated with Christianity or Islam. The Jewish record in this area is almost totally blemishless. However, I have avoided pursuing such an argument, for it is obviously subject to the retort that Jews, being a government-less people, simply never had the civil authority to engage in wholesale witchhunts or persecutions. For discussion's sake I have admitted that Judaism possesses the same potential as Christianity, theoretically at least, to overstep its bounds. In sum, if orthodox faiths have occasionally sinned with their overzealousness in promoting their own causes, then they remain no more guilty in this respect than the mass of mankind. There is little need to dwell on the view of those small-minded individuals, be they religious or not, who feel that all believing Jews or Christians must be paragons of virtue. That is a totally nonsensical opinion. There are innumerable great and kindly men who are committed atheists, just as there are legions of the faithful who are, for all practical purposes, evil men. Religion is no guarantee against sin; it is a guarantee against reducing the value of human beings to that professed by the relativist-materialist, thereby eliminating the only convincing apologetic for tolerance ever advanced: that "man was created in the image of God."

There is, in reality, no such thing as an inherently Jewish approach to subjects such as tolerance or pluralism. The Jewish tradition includes all sorts of opinions on such matters, ranging from the more "authoritarian" to the permissive. Neither side can be said to have had the last word on this issue. However, for the modern Jew who feels himself committed to the doctrines of tolerance there is certainly no lack of sources in the Torah tradition which he would find supporting his view.

As an example of this somewhat more humanistic opinion, I quote from the *Mishneh Torah* of Rabbi Moses Maimonides of the twelfth century, where the famous Spanish sage had the following to say of a religious Jew's obligation towards his alienated co-religionists:

...it is fitting to help them return to their faith and to draw them near with words of peace...³⁶

Clearly not the words of an intolerant bigot. Consider also the life and doctrines of the late Rabbi of Celz, Poland, Aharon Rokeach (1880-1957). This famous sage, who eventually settled in Israel, was noted far and wide as a living personification of all the limitless love of one's fellow which the Torah demands of all Jews. Rabbi Rokeach was once heard to remark, as he was being driven through the streets of Tel Aviv (an Israeli city with an overwhelmingly non-religious populace), that the Jews he saw on the surrounding streets were *dem Rambam's Yidn* ("Maimonides' Jews") in reference to the dictum previously quoted.

The sixteenth century Talmudic sage and mystic, Rabbi Isaac Luria of Safed, Israel, actually wrote into the daily prayer book a short devotional which he considered to be a necessary prerequisite to worship. The text reads:

I hereby accept upon myself the obligation to fulfill the positive Biblical commandment "and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."³⁷

Rabbi Elazar Azikari, a contemporary of Rabbi Luria in Safed and a scholar and mystic in his own right, writes in his commentary to the Book of Lamentations that

when all Jews live in harmony with each other, the Satan cannot afflict them, and the Divine Presence is with them, even if they are not observant.³⁸

Rabbi Yisrael Me'ir Karelitz, the famed *Chazon Ish* of Bnei Brak, Israel, who passed away not very long ago, was one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest Torah authority of recent times. His wide knowledge and almost unbelievable lucidity in the complicated science of Talmudics have made his works on Jewish law veritable classics. On the subject of love and toleration he wrote:

In our times when we do not see open miracles...it is incumbent upon us to restore [non-observant Jews to their

faith] with chains of love and to place them in a ray of light to the greatest extent possible.³⁹

The leading organizations of Torah Judaism have, in our own time, continued in this tradition of boundless concern for all Jews, regardless of religious station. In passing, mention should be made of such groups and individuals as: Agudath Israel and its vast network of programs for the physical and spiritual benefit of all Jews; Young Israel and its efforts among Jewish soldiers, students, etc.; Torah Umesorah and its unparalleled program of Jewish education which extends to literally hundreds of communities in America and Canada; Yavneh and its various educational activities with Jewish youth; National Council of Synagogue Youth, which has brought thousands of young Jews into proximity with their heritage; and last, but certainly not least, the Lubavitcher Rebbe of Brooklyn, with his huge army of dedicated followers, who through dozens upon dozens of assorted endeavors spread material and spiritual well-being to Jews all over the globe. In sum, the Torah tradition, while precisely demarcating the boundaries between belief and heresy, has constantly exhibited the human brotherhood and loving-kindness which the *philosophes* pontificated about but never delivered themselves, nor imbued their activist disciples with.

The *philosophes* were also prone to advance the similarly dubious argument that life during the theocentric centuries was a depressing, agonizing affair, a virtual prison for those condemned to endure it. Here again, the men of the Enlightenment were far better at wishful thinking than they were at historical research. Neither standard historians nor our own latter-day psycho-historians have ever uncovered any evidence to support the preposterous claims with which the men of the "age of reason" sought to influence their fellow Europeans. On the contrary, with the steady erosion of religious belief during the past two centuries mankind seems to have lost the very roots of existence, the sense of purpose, reality, balance, stability, authority and the like which orthodox faith had always supplied. Anxiety, depression and various other neurotic

symptoms are far more common in our own age than in previous centuries. Suicide, violent crime, divorce and a host of other social ills appear to be far more prevalent in the present age than in the "age of faith."

All this is especially true in the case of Judaism. As we have already discussed, every conceivable non-biased historical source testifies to the fact that European Jewry, despite vilification and persecution, despite expulsion and genocide, lived a balanced and happy, although precarious life during the Middle Ages, when Torah faith formed the basis of their being. There is no need to belabor this point. The myth of Jewish unhappiness caused by adherence to God's Torah is simply a figment of the rich imagination of the Jewish disciples of the French Enlightenment. It is no more than a pipe-dream incapable of withstanding any objective airing of the historical facts. In sum, we may safely state that the first area of Enlightenment critique is so patently false as to appear, at least in our twentieth-century eyes, totally ludicrous.

(2) The second field of Enlightenment argument which was briefly mentioned above was that of the allegedly fictional origin of religious faiths in general and, in the case of orthodox faith, of its own documental account of the Divine origin of faith, the Bible, or, as it is known amongst Jews, the Written Torah.* In this area the damage wrought by the *philosophes* on Jewish belief is very easy to trace. As the attacks of the *philosophes* on the validity of the Divine revelation began to spread across Europe, the Torah began to lose much of its luster in the eyes of many misinformed Jews. By challenging the historical reliability of the Scriptures, the polemicists of the "age of reason" were aiming their sights directly at the heart of orthodox faith. As usual, however, their accusations were based neither on objective study nor on scientific research. The discoveries of modern archeology, linguistic research and the like had not been dreamt of in the late eighteenth century. Instead,

*So as to differentiate it from the Oral Torah. See Chapter IV.

in place of an unbiased examination of the then limited available facts, the wise men of France offered their own conjectures, which, in their customary manner, they presented not as yet-to-be-verified hypotheses, but as irrefutable, scientific "facts." D'Holbach was in typical form when he wrote:

The origin of religious opinion is dated from the time when savage nations were yet in infancy. It was to gross, ignorant and stupid people that the founders of religion addressed themselves. . .⁴⁰

Denis Diderot, another leading *philosophe*, offers us the following humorous description of the beginning of religious faith:

There was a man who was betrayed by his children, his wife, and his friends; faithless business associates had sapped his fortune. . . Filled with hatred and profound contempt for mankind, he took his leave of the world and sought solitary refuge in a cave. Once there, grinding his fists into his eyes and meditating a vengeance proportionate to his resentment, he cried, "Oh, scoundrels! What shall I do to punish them for their injustices and make them as unhappy as they deserve to be? . . ." Upon the instant, he rushed out from the cave crying, "God! God!" . .⁴¹

Now, the arguments of the *philosophes* on the subject of religious origins and the Bible must look very childish to our twentieth-century eyes. Since the eighteenth century, there has been such a wealth of scholarship devoted to the subject of Scriptural origins that we can only smile a bit when we hear of those proud Frenchmen pontificating on the subject. In reality, there was almost no evidence available at that time to either support or deny the historicity of Scriptures. Now the question may be raised as to why the *philosophes* drew this picture of history without any evidence. Did the "wise men of Paris" actually *know* where faith, or gods, or anything of the sort *always* originated? Had they done any serious historical research on the subject? Were Voltaire, d'Holbach, Diderot, *et al.* anthropologists, archeologists, philologists or

even historians of any stature whatsoever? Clearly, the conclusion to be drawn here, as elsewhere in the *philosophes'* position, is that they reached their conclusions first, and assembled their facts later. The *philosophes*, working under the influence of what would later come to be called evolutionism, believed in the steady, unalterable upward progress of mankind. This theory left the *philosophes* no other alternative but to conclude that, since the genesis of faith occurred during the period considered to be the "childhood of humanity," religious doctrines must therefore be juvenile and nonsensical. The *philosophes* were committed to a dogma which postulated that the God of religious orthodoxy did not exist and they therefore concluded that the testimony of the Bible, the document most affirming His existence, was of necessity false. How then, they reasoned, did orthodox faith actually begin? Obviously, they concluded, it must have been invented by imaginative men. Why, they would ask themselves, should anything so preposterous have been invented? Simple, they would reply, and proceed to any number of seemingly authenticated theories: it grew out of a priestly caste's urge to dominate, it grew out of the wishful thinking of terrified savages, etc., etc.

Now this sort of thinking is totally absurd. It is a case of myth-construction, pure and simple. Having chosen to rewrite history in the light of their philosophical presuppositions the *philosophes* were forced to attack the Bible, for it contradicted their newly concocted history every step of the way. Again, as in the case of other "axioms" of the "age of reason," it would perhaps be best to simply ignore the bigoted posturing of d'Holbach and his sort, but, alas, we Jews of the twentieth century can ill afford such comforts, pleasing as they might be. The German Enlightenment which resulted in mass defections of Jews from their faith (more on that later) drew its very lifeblood from the fairy-tale Bible criticism of the Enlightenment, with its self-constructed history of "primitive man." (It should perhaps be noted that the *philosophes* were not unanimous in their portrayal of the ancients as ignorant, superstitious fools. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, that leading Enlighten-

ment savant, of a "noble savage," being corrupted by Jacques' imagination.

One of the great Geiger (1810-1874) untold harm in the Jewry, was the movement Bible criticism the origins and that he advocated existing form and Geiger's vehement disciples of the dominant trend of their own religion: people: the Talmud.

Now, if we reason which was noted that the was complex. Many by Bible critics answered in a current trend of Biblical studies of Yehoshua and especially by Benno Jacob, his Jewish doctrines and early composition unduly influenced cultural evolutionism principle of this faith on the popular level.

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ment savant, of course, invented his own private myth of the "noble savage," of a sinless humanity, loving and rational, before being corrupted by evil institutions at some time in antiquity. Jean-Jacques' imagination was also exceptionally fertile.)

One of the prime accomplishments of the likes of Abraham Geiger (1810-1874) of Germany, whose own heretical views wreaked untold harm in the turbulent nineteenth-century views of German Jewry, was the transmission of the unfounded theories of Enlightenment Bible criticism to the masses. In time, Geiger came to believe the origins and doctrines of his own faith to be so totally spurious that he advocated "abolishing every institution of Judaism in its existing form and constructing a new edifice upon its ruins."⁴² Geiger's vehemence was typical of many of the early German disciples of the Enlightenment, who became caught up in the dominant trends of their time and turned their animosity upon their own religion and specifically upon God's contract with His people: the Torah.

Now, if we may pause for a moment in this tale of flight from reason which took place during the "age of reason," it should be noted that the subject of historical Torah research is extremely complex. Many challenges to traditional faith have been put forth by Bible critics of various schools, some of which have yet to be answered in a completely satisfactory manner. However, the general trend of Biblical scholarship in recent years, as represented by the likes of Yechezkel Kaufmann, the Scandinavian Uppsala school and especially by the pioneering efforts of Umberto Cassuto and Benno Jacob, has been in the general direction of the authentic Jewish doctrines of Mosaic authorship of the Five Books of Moses and early composition of other books. The modern Jew, when not unduly influenced by the theories of vague systems of mechanistic cultural evolutionism, may feel secure that this all-important principle of this faith can be substantiated on the scholarly as well as the popular level.⁴³

In concluding this area of Enlightenment polemics, it is interesting to note the words of the wise anti-*philosophe* of the "age of

reason," Elie Catherine Freron, in an open letter to his supposedly "rational" opponents:

Is not the fanaticism of your irreligion more absurd and dangerous than the fanaticism of superstition? Begin by tolerating the faith of your fathers. You talk of nothing but tolerance and never was a sect more intolerant.⁴⁴

To which we can only solemnly add, amen.

(3) The next area of the *philosophes'* doctrines to which we shall return is their belief in the inherently rational and good character of humanity. This exaltation of "natural man" led the leaders of Enlightenment thought to the conclusion that all human unhappiness had been caused by faulty institutions and that with the help of "pure reason," in the words of the Marquis de Condorcet, "a happiness and an enlightenment about which we cannot today even form a vague idea" could be brought about.

This is probably the most significant part of the philosophy of the Enlightenment: the conviction that by eradicating one or several evils in the world, mankind could usher in a new era of utopian perfection. In fact, nearly every non-religious ideology of the past two hundred years has offered just such a program of remaking the world of reality as we know it, by applying the final and complete answers of Hegelian immanentism, Marxian determinism, Comtean positivism, etc., *ad infinitum*. As Professor Eric Voegelin writes:

The temptation to fall from a spiritual height that brings the element of uncertainty into final clarity, down into the more solid certainty of world-immanent, sensible fulfillment ... seems to be a general human problem. ...⁴⁵

Jean d'Alembert expressed the sentiments of the *philosophes* on this matter in clear strokes when he wrote:

One century believes itself destined to change the laws of mankind in every kind. ... If one examines the midpoint of

the century in which we live a very remarkable change is taking place. . . . The true system of the world has been recognized, perfected, developed.⁴⁸

Now, if there is any one area of Enlightenment dogma which has been thoroughly discredited in modern times, it has to be this tenet of a progressively perfectable humanity. The *philosophes* firmly believed that just as soon as the chains of religion and superstition were removed from the supposedly suffering body of mankind, a new, utopian age would be ushered in. They sincerely felt that human beings were good at the core (contrary to orthodox faith, which had constantly emphasized the empirically verifiable fact that men were in essence a mixture of good and evil) and the only hindrances to their achieving unlimited brotherhood, self-fulfillment, euphoria, etc., were evil superstitions and customs set up by equally evil societies and culture. If only, they claimed, humanity would sit down and scientifically go about their affairs, we would all live happily ever after.

Most assuredly, history has simply not borne the *philosophes* out on this point. Instead, during the past two hundred years human beings have not conducted their affairs in the light of a totally neutral, scientific subjectivism, but they have simply replaced the beliefs of traditional, orthodox faith with those of various secular ideologies. All these new systems are similar in their basic characteristic of purporting to be the only means toward mankind's ultimate salvation and of viewing the entire historic process as an ongoing, unified whole the conclusion of which was near at hand. It is unmistakably clear that the secular panaceas which the Enlightenment unleashed upon the world were basically perverted replicas of traditional religious faith. Each of them had their prophets of irrefutable truth. Each of them claimed to have answered the basic question of the human dilemma and each claimed to be capable of bringing about the millennium, usually through an Armageddon of sorts. Alexis de Tocqueville showed that the various systems born in the philosophical cradle of the Enlightenment were themselves "a kind of new religion, a religion without

God, but one which nevertheless inundated the earth with soldiers, apostles and martyrs."

In reality these "new religions" were far less rational than traditional faith had been. They took on an aura of a crusading "justification by faith," so to speak. Almost all post-1789 ideologies took on the dimensions of semi-religions, whether in the extreme forms of Saint-Simonism and the "Cult of Reason" or in the less open, although no less magical religions of Communism and Liberalism.

Actually this process of pre-empting the values of religious faith and re-packaging them with man-centered covering was quite predictable. Contrary to the axioms of the *philosophes*, there has never existed in the entire history of civilization a culture basing itself on pure subjectivist rationality, divorced from a framework of reality, values, principles and morals of some sort. It is simply impossible for human beings, if they are to remain in any way cohesive, in any way stable, to exist without some unifying concepts of ultimate truth. By tearing Europe away from its ancient attachment to revealed faith, the *philosophes* simply cleared the way for new "revelations"—revelations not from God to Moses, but from the "God of Reason" to the "prophet" Paine or the "prophet" Nietzsche, or the "prophet" Bentham, or the "prophet" Marx, etc., etc., etc.

In France in the aftermath of the Revolution these quasi-religious sentiments were expressed in an open, though grotesque manner. A local woman of ill repute was enthroned as the "Goddess of Reason" in Notre Dame cathedral where "church services" were offered to the divinities "Reason" and "Liberty." A special "service" to the new deities was written for the occasion:

Descend, O Liberty, daughter of Nature;
The people, recovering thy immortal power,
Upon the stately ruins of old imposture,
Raise once again thy altar!

Come, conqueror of kings, Europe's example;

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Come, over false Gods complete thy success!
 Thou, Saint Liberty, inhabit this temple,
 Be of our nation the Goddess!

These new religions, certainly far less tolerant than the old ones had ever been, produced results totally different from those foreseen in the giddy atmosphere of the mid-eighteenth century. The philosophical descendants of the Enlightenment were zealous, self-proclaimed remakers of mankind. Humanity has been buying their secular panaceas for some two hundred years and apparently something has gone wrong somewhere, for we have yet to witness the approach of what Jacques Turgot called "ever-nearing perfection." Instead, huge systems of secular-totalitarian barbarism have been periodically established by just those forces in society that have appealed the most to the dictates of reason.

Professor Gerhart Niemeyer calls secular theories of this sort, which seek to totally alter the given conditions of human existence, "ideologies" and explains their inherently anti-rational, anti-philosophical character:

"Ideological" refers to the subordination of contemplative theory to the *libido dominandi* which manifests itself in the building of closed systems around dogmatically willed "positions," in reduction of both scope and fabric of analysis, and in the determination to substitute an intellectually fabricated "Second Reality" for the reality given to man. "Gnostic" is a word based on the structural similarity between the Gnostic religions of the first three centuries of our era with modern ideologies. This similarity is found in metaphysical discontent, the attribution of evil to the environment world rather than to the human heart, belief in the possibility of salvation from the evil world as a whole, certainty that salvation is to be wrought by human action, and the acceptance of ideological "knowledge" of the methods of total change as the message of salvation for mankind... the total critique of the ideologists assails society but actually aims at God, the cosmos, morality and reason.⁴⁷

To illustrate the anti-philosophical nature of Communism, for example, we need only point out its emphasis on economic factors to the exclusion of religious, moral, cultural, historical, etc., considerations, as it views the world situation. Marx held that the cause of all of mankind's sadness, or in his term "alienation," was the existence of private capital and property. By postulating this outlandishly simplistic view of "human" needs, he was able to further assert that with the elimination of material considerations all of the world's populace would automatically revert to an idyllic state of eternal utopian happiness. Actually, all Marx did was paint a fanciful picture of reality, and then proceed to issue dogmatic statements on the basis of that picture. Professor Eric Voegelin explains how the difficulties presented by the true empirical structure of the world are skillfully avoided by ideologists:

The world, however, remains as it is given to us, and it is not within man's power to change its structure. In order — *not*, to be sure, to make the undertaking possible — but to make it appear possible, every gnostic intellectual who drafts a program to change the world must first construct a world picture from which these essential features of the constitution of being that would make the program appear hopeless and foolish have been eliminated.⁴⁸

We can sympathize with the yearnings of utopian dreamers. The world in its reality confronts us with much evil, pain and suffering. There are many puzzles which life presents us which must remain unsolved. It would indeed be emotionally comforting to parrot the 1984-dogmas of committed ideologists if one were capable of believing them. However, being as we see it refutes all the simplistic myth-making of the secular "true believers." In contrast to the glib assurance of various utopian myth-makers stands the edifice of transcendental religious faith which postulates no dogmas which contradict the evidence of reality and offers no quasi-magical substitutes for man as we know him.

As we now proceed to examine the "light" of the Enlighten-

ment as it was refracted among the Jewish population of Europe, the significance of the fanciful but erroneous ideologies of the eighteenth century for the modern Jew will become markedly and at times frighteningly clear.

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II HOW DID WE GET HERE?

PART TWO

The day was Simchath Torah, the time of rejoicing in the Torah. The place was the Nazi concentration camp of Treblinka. As some one hundred emaciated skeletons of Jewish yeshiva students were being marched off to what they knew was the certain death of the gas chamber, they seemed strangely oblivious to their fate. With a sense of joy they amazingly remained impervious to all that was going on about them and happily discussed among themselves the meaning of the festive holiday at hand. As they dragged their weakened bodies along the last fifty feet to the death houses, they suddenly broke into song. As the astounded Nazi guards looked on, their voices resounded throughout the camp, as they sang the traditional melody of the day, sisu vesimchu:

*Thrill with joy over the Torah!
Render glory to the Torah!
Her profits are richest of all;
She is more precious than jewels,*

*We exult over this Torah,
For she is our strength and our light.*

*As long as I live I will tell
Of Your wonder and Your kindness,
Let us exalt in this Torah
For she is our strength and our light.*

*Happy is Israel!
Happy is Israel!
Happy is Israel!
Who have been chosen by God
And received the Torah in the desert, as a gift.*

*I shall rejoice and exult on Simchath Torah,
The Redeemer shall come on Simchath Torah;
Torah is the Tree of Life to all living,
For You are the source of life.*

Still singing, they were led into the chambers and gassed.

AS TOLD BY AN EYE-WITNESS

Dr. Hirsch: . . . I do not believe in Revelation, if thereby is meant what is generally supposed to have occurred at Sinai. Nor does my congregation. They have been taught by myself as well as by my predecessors that religion is the result of evolution.

Dr. Moses: The very word Revelation leads us into the domain of mysticism.

FROM THE TRANSCRIPTS OF THE FIRST
CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN "REFORM
RABBIS", Pittsburgh 1885

*Before the coming of the Messiah, there will be an age of
summers without heat, of winters without cold, and of rabbis
without Torah . . .*

R. MENACHEM MENDEL OF KOTZK,
Poland (1787-1859)

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Despite all its pompous and superficial self-assuredness, the Enlightenment tore across the face of Europe. Napoleon's imperialistic militarism, combined with many social and intellectual forces, contributed to its successes. Many European thinkers, especially in Germany, ignored the empirical lessons of the state of total chaos which the French Revolution had caused in France and proceeded to preach the doctrines of a new dawn for mankind with a fervor characteristic of the *philosophes*. The unrestrained barbarism perpetrated in the name of "liberty, equality and fraternity" in France was not a mere aberration. A secularist, as we have pointed out previously, is in the final analysis incapable of advancing a convincing defense of the sacredness of human life. As the former Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court and famed devotee of "secular humanism," Oliver Wendell Holmes, once said:

Man at present is a predatory animal. I think that the sacredness of human life is a purely municipal idea of no validity outside the jurisdiction.¹

The unbelievable horrors — the genocidal massacres of whole cities, slaughter of wounded prisoners of war, murder and dismemberment of religious leaders, wholesale torture of children, mass rape, etc. — of the eighteenth-century French supporters of the Enlightenment were a literal fulfillment of the materialistic ideologies of the *philosophes*. A certain revolutionary general by the name of

Westermann reported on his share in bringing about the "age of reason" when he wrote in his message to the notorious "Committee of Public Welfare":

The Vendée . . . no longer exists. She is dead . . . together with her women and children. I have just buried her in the swamps and forests of Savenay. Following the orders you gave me, I have massacred the women, and they are no longer going to give birth to any more brigands. I am not guilty of taking a single prisoner. I have exterminated them all. . . . The roads are covered with corpses. There are so many of them that a several places they form pyramids. The firing squads work incessantly at Savenay since every moment brigands arrive who pretend that they will surrender as prisoners . . . but we are not taking any . . . compassion is not a revolutionary virtue.

The "gods of Atheism," as anyone familiar with the history of the past two hundred years must surely know, are not merciful "gods." Unrestrained by the morality of revelation, the secularist enforces his man-made myths with terrifying ruthlessness. The panaceas of the non-believers tend to change, but their quasi-religious fanaticism in supporting them does not. As the famous economist Ludwig von Mises once wrote:

After having nullified the fable of the divine mission of anointed kings, the liberal fell prey to no less illusory doctrines, to the irresistible power of reason, to the infallibility of the *volonté générale*, and to the divine inspiration of majorities.²

In pursuit of these and similar doctrines, the harbingers of the "age of reason" unleashed upon the French people a fury which would remain unrivaled until our own days of the maniacal secularist-totalitarians Hitler and Stalin. In their anthem, the "Marseillaise," the ideological descendants of Encyclopedists articulated the end results of their philosophies which reduced man to the level of the paramecium:

To arms, citizens, form your battalions, let us march, march,
so that impure blood will drench our furrows.

In contemplating the bloody path of carnage and wreckage which the revolutionaries brought about we can fully appreciate the grimly humorous remark of the Austrian Foreign Minister Clemens Metternich:

When I saw what people did in the name of fraternity, I resolved if I had a brother to call him a cousin.³

It is important to note one aspect of the Enlightenment and its activist successor the French Revolution, which is generally disregarded by historians. I am referring to the fact that the anti-religious stance of revolutionary France was not limited to anti-Catholicism, but also involved the systematic and ruthless repression of Judaism. This should not come as a surprise to the reader at this juncture. The crushing atheism of post-1789 France was not intent upon bringing about reforms of existing religious institutions. Its ultimate goal was the complete eradication of religious faith and coerced citizen participation in the new state-ordained "cult of reason." The totalitarian attempt to destroy traditional faith reached its culmination (as did other policies of the revolutionaries) during the period of the well-known "Jacobin terror" of 1793-94. During those two horrifying years, the people of France were subjected to the logical fulfillment of the ideologies of Diderot and d'Holbach. The "age of reason" had finally dawned.

In 1793 the Jacobin administrators of the Bas-Rhin region of France were shocked to hear that the body of a recently deceased Jew was being brought into their section "in order to be buried according to the idiotic laws of Rabbinism." This "terrible" event caused an uproar among the higher echelons of the "men of reason," who promptly circulated a letter to all their district leaders which read:

We are less concerned in this case about their [the Jews'] religious system than about their criminal apathy to all citi-

zens who do not belong to their religious cult. It is to this that you and we ought to pay particular attention.⁴

"Particular attention" was certainly paid to "those who were formerly Jews," as the Jacobins officially referred to the Jewish citizenry of France. Jewish synagogues throughout France were closed or converted into "Temples of Reason." The Jacobin Committee at Saint Esprit justified its forced closing of synagogues in the area with the argument that they were "strick[ing] at the roots of fanaticism." This same committee forbade the observance of the Jewish Sabbath under punishment of fine or imprisonment. In Alsace-Lorraine the dictates of "nature" and "reason" were also brutally enforced. Synagogues were converted into clubs and warehouses, and Jewish cemeteries were destroyed by municipal officials. In the city of Strasbourg, Torah scrolls were confiscated by the state and ceremoniously burned in public. In Metz, Torah parchments were similarly seized and converted into drumheads. In various cities throughout France rabbis were dragged into public market places where they, along with assorted Catholic clergy, were forced to recite a lengthy public renunciation of religious faith and to declare their loyalty to the Revolution. In the towns of Hagenu, Metz and Nice the mere observance of simple Jewish laws concerning Sabbath and holiday laws became a completely underground affair with secret meetings in workaday clothes at which religious services were conducted. When the Jacobin pro-consul of Metz was approached by an elderly Jewish woman to ask permission to observe the traditional Passover *seder*, the official exclaimed, "What, you still cling to this nonsense with the sun of reason shining on the horizon?"⁵

However, the grim reality of secular revolutionism was not readily apparent elsewhere in Europe at the time. Many well-meaning people were misled by the high-sounding rhetoric and superficial reforms of the secularists. This condition was, as we said before, actually noticeable in Germany. It was there that the glib doctrines and theories of the "age of Robespierre" first began to

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affect the eternal edifice of Torah Judaism. As Isaac Eisenstein-Barzilay noted:

The works of Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau and other enlightened writers were avidly read by a great many people of the rising Jewish middle class and intellectual elite in Berlin and the Jewish communities in the Germanies.⁶

Humanity was supposedly entering a new era, and a surprising number of German Jewish thinkers jumped on the bandwagon of this simplistic, child-like utopianism. Motivated to a large extent by pragmatic material considerations, such as the desire to gain stature in the eyes of their gentile counterparts, as well as by the alluring phrases of the *philosophes*, groups of men in cities such as Seesau, Frankfurt and Hamburg began to dismantle the structure of Torah Judaism, brick by brick. It would be futile to describe the naive and misinformed idealism of those early "Reformers" if not for the fact that their doctrines still shape the ideologies of many influential Jewish minds of our own era. It is for this reason that we must return to the actual words and deeds of the early nineteenth century, when the estrangement of Jews from their faith began. We shall briefly retrace the steps which led from seemingly insignificant changes to the promulgation of totally heretical systems and doctrines. The point to be remembered as we outline the picture of those epoch-making days is that the "Reformers" were not interested in Torah Judaism as ordained by God. Instead, they attempted to graft some meaningless platitudes from traditional faith onto the main body of Enlightenment "idealism." These transplants at times took on strange and bizarre coloration, as we shall soon see. No longer was human life to be judged by divine standards. God Himself and His revelation were to be submitted to critical judgment. The "Reformers" were not interested in living up to the laws of God but, instead, in placing the Creator himself on trial — as C. S. Lewis expressed it, in putting "God in the dock." The jury was the *zeitgeist* and the verdict resulted in the eventual apathetic alienation of Jews from their God.

In the debates in post-monarchical France over the question of

Jewish emancipation, the tone of the times was made clear by one Deputy, Clermont-Tonnère, who declared:

To the Jews as men — everything; as Jews — nothing! If they accept this, well and good. If not, let them be banished!⁷

In short, the toleration preached by the Enlightenment was of a very limited kind. It extended only to those willing to adopt the dogmas of the times. This meant, in simple terms, that no forms of pre 1789 "superstitious obscurantism" were to be tolerated. In the case of the Jews this meant, basically, that *no Judaism* was to be tolerated. The price of Jewish admission to the "age of reason" was very high indeed. Either the Jew was to divest himself of Torah beliefs at the turnstile of the "new dawn," thereby "emancipating" himself and allowing his entry into secularist-gentile Europe, or back to the ghetto. (In time, the twentieth-century descendants of the secular age would demand both the elimination of Torah and the persecution of even non-religious Jews. But in the nineteenth century a "rosy" choice of alternatives was offered.)

It was in this heady atmosphere of "new era" and utopian ideologies that the figure of Moses Mendelssohn appeared on the scene. Born in the German city of Dessau in 1720, Mendelssohn journeyed to Berlin at the age of fourteen, where he absorbed the doctrines of *Aufklärung*. The result of this period of intellectual indoctrination in the Berlinian salons was a hybrid ideology of Judaism which exerted great influence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Mendelssohn vainly sought to combine the doctrines of English Deists, French *philosophes* and traditional Torah Judaism into one confusing conglomeration of "naturalism" and "revelation."

While ostensibly declaring his loyalty to the "faith of Israel," Mendelssohn propounded theories which in reality literally knocked the foundation out from under traditional Judaism. He asserted, for example, that Jewish law was given by God in order to coax the ancient Israelites back to the beliefs of pure, natural religion.

He further claimed that the existence of Jews as a distinct people and the observance of Jewish laws was only necessary in order to safeguard the principle of simple theism against the time when Christians and Jews would both enter into a brotherhood of purified religious fellowship.⁸

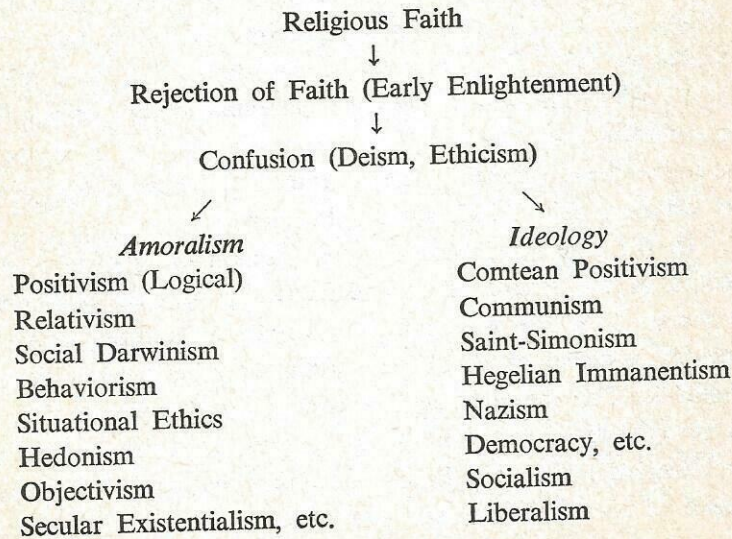
There is a popular misconception, based upon the general mood of Mendelssohn's major work, *Jerusalem*, that he sought to preserve traditional Judaism. What is generally overlooked is that in numerous other writings he completely repudiated this view. Indeed, the misconception caused by the Mendelssohn of *Jerusalem* can, for all practical purposes, be refuted when we consider the following facts which shed light on the man's true nature: (1) almost all of Mendelssohn's disciples rejected Judaism and did so in the name of their master and with his knowledge; (2) Mendelssohn totally ignored the irreligiosity of his inner circle of friends; (3) his favorite son, Joseph, was never given Jewish instruction or asked to subscribe to the beliefs and practices of his faith.⁹

In sum, Mendelssohn's philosophy is typical of the confused deism or ethical theism of first-generation rejection of religious faith. As Maurice de Bonald once wrote, "a deist is an atheist who hasn't lived long enough to become one." Mendelssohn futilely sought to set his doctrine-less Judaism against a backdrop of traditional faith. Of course, the attempt failed, but in so failing it gave birth to the twin heresies of nineteenth-century German Jewry: assimilation and "Reform." Let us pause now for a moment to examine these uniquely Jewish trends in relation to the rejection of orthodox faith which affected Europe in general.

In the case of Christianity the rejection of religious faith resulted in the spread of two diametrically opposed philosophical currents. The first was (not in sequence, of course) *amoralism*; that is, a denial of all ultimate truth, all value systems; it manifested itself in the eighteenth century in the Marquis de Sade and is personified in our own day by assorted relativists, subjectivists, behaviorists and so on. This group claims that truth is beyond the reach of human beings, and therefore all concepts such as moral

good, justice, etc., are mere fantasies. The second trend, and by far the more alluring of the two, is the *ideological* total commitment. It postulates that if only humanity were to install a given cure-all, be it "universal suffrage," "abolition of property," "world government," etc., then all would live "happily ever after." As we have pointed out, these positions remain completely oblivious to the true condition of mankind, which does not consist of just one factor, be it of a political, economical, psychological, etc., nature, but of literally thousands of diverse and contradictory component parts. The ideologue refuses to recognize this fact and its logical result — that the world can never be perfected, only reformed in specific areas. In adopting such an approach the ideologue is simply spouting dogmas in a quasi-religious vein. Instead of seeking salvation for himself by living in accordance with religious strictures, he claims to be able to save the entire world via the institution of political or social panaceas.

These two replacements for religious faith, the *amoral* and the *ideological*, have been ever-recurrent in world history since the Enlightenment. Viewed graphically, the history of the past two hundred years could be seen thus:

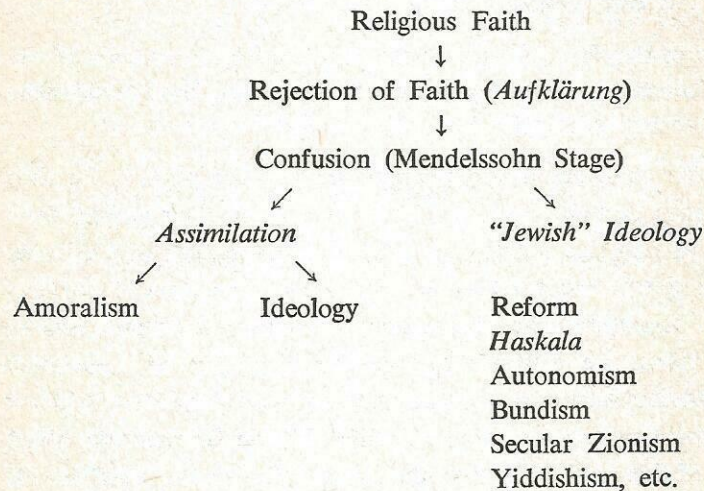


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On the other hand, as far as the Jew is concerned, there is the alternative step of assimilation into non-Jewish culture. The "sons of Israel" cannot, generally speaking, move deftly from the confusion which is typified by a Mendelssohn to the twin alternatives outlined above. Accordingly, for the Jew, assimilation represents the end point of his flight from religion *as a Jew*. From then on (usually one or more generations later) the estranged Jew can opt for one of the twin heresies of the non-Jew. For the Jew wishing to somehow maintain his "folk identity" and yet turn his back on Judaism, the past two centuries have produced a host of distinctly "Jewish ideologies." A Jewish version of the above diagram would be:



Modern Judaism is still confronted with the dual danger of assimilation and ideology, although assimilation is no longer the idealistic fare which it was in nineteenth-century Germany. The contemporary Jew slowly slips away from his people, while the intellectual Jews of the *Aufklärung* left their faith with a bang. Consider, for example, the case of Mendelssohn's own son, Abraham, whose raised his children as Christians and eventually himself converted. In a letter to his children he explained his motives:

Naturally, when you consider what scant value I placed on any form in particular, I felt no urge to choose the form known as Judaism, that most antiquated, distorted and self-defeating form of all. Therefore, I raised you as Christians, Christianity being the most purified form and the most accepted by the majority of mankind...¹⁰

In a like manner, Mendelssohn's daughter Dorothea rejected her faith:

I... find... Protestant Christianity indeed purer and to be preferred to the Catholic. For me, the latter bore too much resemblance to the old Judaism which I abhor.¹¹

These two children of the author of *Jerusalem* were not isolated rebels. The *Encyclopaedia Judaica* relates that

...in the first decades of the nineteenth century most of the educated and wealthy German Jews [were] lost to Judaism [through] conversion.¹²

Today, the doctrines of assimilation need not be refuted, for they are virtually non-existent. Jews leave the fold of their ancient faith not out of idealistic longings to adopt the "pure faith of Christianity," but simply because they no longer find the claims of Judaism relevant. Therefore, since conversion is a rare phenomenon among modern Jews, we will not explore the ideologies of those who advocated it a century ago. (To the Jew who finds the "faith of Israel" no longer *germane* to his life, I have directed the third chapter of this book.) On the other hand, "Jewish ideology" is still very much with us, so in the following pages we shall examine the most popular of all such movements: "Reform Judaism."

In the small German town of Seesan, a Jew by the name of Israel Jacobson believed he had the solution to the problems presented by modernity. He offered a new brand of Judaism devoid of all its distinguishing marks, a Judaism unpossessed of anything that would offend the sensibilities of non-Jews. In fact, Jacobson envisioned the eventual combining of Judaism and Christianity into one uni-

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versal faith. Most historians of the "Reform" movement mark its genesis from that seventeenth day of July in 1810, when the wealthy Jacobson saw his "new Judaism" put into practice with the dedication of his own private synagogue, the "Temple of Jacob." An eyewitness account of the ceremonies of that day leaves little doubt as to the tendencies that the Temple was to be representing:

At 8:00 all who had come to participate in the festivities assembled in the school hall of the well-known educational institute which President Jacobson had founded in Seesan. One could see... *Jewish, Protestant, and Catholic clergymen ... all walking together in complete concord*.*... At 9:00, the ringing of bells** announced that the ceremonies would begin.

... Then came a chorale accompanied by organ and full orchestra, and this was sung first in Hebrew and then also in German... the singing of which the Christians and Israelites participated in with deep emotion.

The festivities were original and unique. Where would one have seen a similar day on which Jews and Christians celebrated together in a common service, in the presence of more than forty clergymen of both religions, and then sat down to eat and rejoice together in intimate company?¹³

In case the reader doubts the philosophical wellsprings on which Jacobson was nurtured, consider the following excerpts from his dedication address which concluded the events of that fateful day. In his words we hear clearly the doctrines of the *philosophes*, as he declared:

[My Israelite brothers]... your true and progressive enlightenment depends upon this rapprochement [between you and our Christian neighbors]. On it depends the education of your spirit for true religiosity.... Who would deny that our service is sickly because of many useless things... that it kills devotion more than encourages it. On all sides, enlightenment

*All italics mine.

**Jewish houses of worship had never before featured bells!

opens up new areas for development. Why should we alone remain behind?¹⁴

Jacobson made no qualms about openly stating the ultimate purpose of his reforms, which was the total destruction of the Torah faith. Of course, it would take some time to realize that goal. So, for the meantime, he had to content himself with a somewhat smaller dose of "reform." In the dedication address, however, he did indeed inform the "congregation" of his long-range plans:

In building this edifice, it has not been my intent to bring about a complete *religious unification of all religions*.^{*} One accomplishes nothing at all if one desires everything or too much at one time.¹⁵

Eventually though, he continued, Christians and Jews were to be regarded as "brothers," who

... finally, under Thy guidance, walk toward a common goal and who, in the end, when the mist will have been dispelled from before our eyes and all the errors gone from our spirit and all doubts removed from our reason, *will meet each other on one and the same road*.^{*16}

The efforts of Jacobson and those like him had one ultimate goal, the elimination from Judaism of anything that went beyond a mere ethical theism. As the noted Jewish sociologist Salo Baron described the actual intent of those early "Reformers":

Jewish Reform may be seen as a gigantic effort, partly unconscious, by many of the best minds of Western Jewry to reduce differences between Jew and Gentile to a slight matter of creed, at the same time adopting the Gentile's definition of what was properly a matter of creed. . . . Assimilation via reform was the Jewish destiny, as the nineteenth century European, Jew and non-Jew saw it.¹⁷

In 1818, the efforts to strip God's people of their traditional faith

^{*}Italics mine.

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began to bear fruit as the first regular "Reform" synagogue was established in Hamburg. It was there that what was considered at the time one of the most disturbing aspects of Judaism was dropped overboard by the "enlightened" ones. All mention of the land of Israel, Jerusalem, the Messiah and similar "unpatriotic" notions were totally stricken from the prayerbook. The words of the additional prayer for the Sabbath, which embodies the thoughts and feelings of Jews everywhere from the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, had become uncomfortable for the men of the Hamburg Temple. This was not surprising. The authoritative text reads:

May it be Your will, God, our God and God of our fathers, to lead us up in joy to our land and to plant us within our borders...

In the "new" prayerbook, which was officially put into use in Hamburg in 1819, the entire passage was eliminated.

This animosity to the traditional Jewish love for the Holy Land was caused partly by an aversion to all things distinctly Jewish and partly by a fear of antagonizing the non-Jewish citizens of the "German fatherland." As the "Society of the Friends of Reform" proclaimed in their 1842 Frankfort-on-the-Main declaration:

A Messiah who is to lead the Israelites back to the land of Palestine is neither expected nor desired by us; we know no fatherland except that to which we belong by birth or citizenship.¹⁸

A sense of patriotism to their beloved fatherland caused the "Reformers" to totally reject all the fundamental doctrines of the Jewish faith which obligated a belief in the eventual Divine restoration of the Jewish state. Israel was to them a far-away land with no meaning. Indeed, as they envisioned a virtual heaven on earth, beginning with their own "age of Reason," was it not simply silly to hope for a fanciful, distant utopia, when the real one was so near at hand? As the nineteenth century "Reformer" Moses Gutmann viewed things, a new millennium was already dawning:

Compared to the oppressive conditions of former times, the Israelites of today rejoice in all lands in the most favorable treatment, and they hope and desire nothing more fervently . . . [than] that they might soon be admitted to full citizenship. Is it not then a great contradiction . . . [to] implore our Heavenly Father to lead us back to a far-away land, and found there our own state.¹⁹

In America, the "Reform" movement continued its open antagonism to the traditional Jewish homeland, the Holy Land of Israel. Attachment to any outward signs of Jewish uniqueness ran contrary to the belief of the "Reformers" in a new universality of all religions, into which Judaism was eventually to be incorporated. This aversion to the land of the Jews was to remain a central part of the "Reformist" thesis in the United States until 1937. It took over one hundred years to prove to these creators of a "purified" deistic faith that the age of brotherly love between peoples was simply not in the cards. However, as late as 1885, in their famous Pittsburgh Platform, the leading "Reform Rabbis" in America were still parroting the old, worn-out clichés of the eighteenth-century *philosophes*. For example, they naively declared in the fifth paragraph of that platform:

We recognize in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect the approach of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice and peace among all men. We . . . expect neither a return to Palestine . . . nor the restoration of any of the laws concerning the Jewish state.²⁰

As a matter of fact, the well-known "Reform" leader in both Germany and America, David Einhorn, called for a total transformation of the traditional day of Jewish mourning, the ninth of Av. On that day, both the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem were destroyed. For thousands of years, according to the command of the Jewish prophets, Jews had fasted and prayed for forgiveness of sins, on this, the most sorrowful day of the Jewish calendar. As a famous traditional Jewish leader once declared:

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If God had not commanded us to fast on the ninth of Av, it would be of no difference, for on a day of that sort, no Jew is capable of eating. His sorrows overwhelm him.

Be that as it may, "Rabbi" Einhorn demanded that the ninth of Av be turned into a holiday, a time of national rejoicing. Clearly, he argued, the age of Enlightenment and emancipation had forever blotted out all remembrances of past sorrows. The destruction of the Holy Temple was for Einhorn a wonderful occurrence, for he observed that, as Jews were "cleansed from pagan customs" and the "shackles of religious coercion," then,

the holy Temple...melted away in flames, to let freedom emerge from the ashes as the triumphant queen and master.²¹

Of course, the destruction of Jerusalem and the slaughter and havoc wreaked on the Jews at that time were of no consequence. Indeed, Einhorn, his impudence apparently knowing no bounds, viewed God as actually rejoicing in this desolation! The Creator of the world and the Giver of the Torah is seen by Einhorn as happily witnessing the desolation of His people, as a preparation for — yes! — the "Age of Enlightenment," the new utopia:

...God sees farther than man. He recognized in the fallen Temple merely the foundation and cornerstone for the house of prayer for all people. Before his eyes, He could already view an altogether different scene of distant millennia...and Israel no longer wailing and weeping, but...shouting with exultation: "God hath made me forget all my toil and my father's house..."²²

"Rabbi" Samuel Hirsch, a "radical Reformer," was very adamant on this point. The "new era of prophetic redemption and messianic fulfillment" was at hand. Jews simply had to jump on the bandwagon. "Any symbols that would prevent" the participation of Jews in this history-ending epoch had to be cast aside.

Perhaps the best known of the early Reformers was the Frankfort-born Abraham Geiger, whom we previously mentioned.

His intention, openly expressed in the private letter quoted above, was to "abolish every institution of Judaism in its existing form." Usually portrayed as a "moderate Reformer" as, opposed to, say, an Einhorn or a Hirsch, the "Rabbi" of Breslau, Frankfort and Berlin was nothing of the sort. With impudence typical of an ideological descendant of the *philosophes*, Geiger literally tore twelve centuries out of Jewish history when he pompously declared that between the "sixth and eighteenth century" Judaism was seized by "rigid legalism" and "paralysis of thought."²³ The eternal symbol of Jewishness, the covenant of Abraham, the act of ritual circumcision, in defense of which Jews have martyred themselves thousands of times throughout history, came under special attack from this zealous "Reformer." In 1845, in a characteristic *private letter*, Geiger derided the sign of the faith in typically vicious terms:

It [circumcision] remains a barbarous, bloody act. . . . However tenaciously religious sentiment may have clung to it formerly, at present its only supports are habit and fear, to which we certainly do not wish to erect any shrines.²⁴

In his "enlightened" mind, there was no room, not only for love of the Divine Torah, but even for one's fellow Jew. For Geiger, as for his fellow "Reformers," Judaism remained nothing more than "ethical monotheism." Therefore, in the confused mind of this German "theologian," there was no longer any logic in showing loyalty or solidarity with Jews elsewhere. Wasn't the "new age" already dawning? The whole sordid relationship of Geiger to the Jews of Damascus during the blood libel of 1840 is too lengthy to relate here in depth.²⁵ Briefly: a Jew had been accused of killing a Gentile for the usual ill-defined "ritual" purpose. Pogroms broke out in the city and many Jews were killed. The world Jewish community went into an uproar—that is, with the exception of the enlightened "Rabbis" of Germany. Under Geiger's leadership, they maintained a negative attitude to all manifestations of Jewish togetherness. There was no sense in worrying about the poor Jews in Damascus, anyway, for the era of universal brotherhood and

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The heady optimism, the dogmatic rationalism, the selfish "universalism" which the "Reformers" displayed, were all traits directly traceable to the heritage of d'Alembert, Condorcet, and their ilk. The words and phrases, the very tone of the rhetoric, is a direct echo of the *philosophes* of the previous century. France believed the *philosophes* and brought on the genocidal terror of the Revolution; German Jews believed the Reformers and abandoned their faith in droves. They were rudely awakened from their euphoric slumber a century later, when the "new age" which the Reformers heralded was, indeed, ushered in. However, this "new age" did not preach the language of "liberty, equality and fraternity." Instead of the red Jacobin cap, it wore the brown shirt of National Socialism. Spouting a doctrine weirdly woven together from pagan infantilism and secular totalitarianism, these modern representatives of the "fatherland" to which the "Society of the Friends of Reform" had pledged their "allegiance" some 91 years before, turned on the helpless spiritual descendants of the "Reform" era, with all the fury which only secular ideologists can truly muster. Painfully, the Jews of Germany, some ninety-five per cent of whom had abandoned Torah beliefs and practices, were reminded by the God of Israel of their Jewishness. Apparently Hitler, Goebbels, Goering and Eichmann had never heard David Einhorn or Samuel Hirsch speaking of the "ethical monotheism" which was supposed to embrace all of mankind. If they had heard, they remained totally oblivious; and so, at the "end" of Israel Jacobson's "long road," Jew and Gentile never did actually meet, for the Jews were shipped off to Auschwitz to die in celebration of Nazi secularist ideology.

Without Torah, without the strength of the faith of their fathers, German Jews stood helpless and shocked as the events of the 1933 elections, the Nuremberg Laws and the "Crystal Night" cascaded down upon them. Their synagogues, long converted into veritable replicas of the church, no longer offered anything more than, to

quote the "Friends of Reform," "the possibility of unlimited progress in Mosaism..."

For the Nazis, though, "Mosaism" could have "progressed unlimitedly" for a thousand years. It made no difference. In the famous "Crystal Night" almost all Jewish synagogues in Germany were burned and plundered. Jews were spat upon, raped and beaten. In vain would German Jewry attempt to tell the advocates of the "new era" that their faith was not offensive, that it embodied nothing of significance, that all the "institutions of Judaism had been razed to the ground." The Nazis remained deaf to their denials. As the inexorable events of the 1930's ground on, the disciples of the Reformers were desperate. What had happened to all their dreams? Unfortunately, they no longer had a live, viable God to call on. The deistic God of "ethical monotheism," while popular in the salons of the Enlightenment, offered small solace to the terrified Jews of Hitler's time. The German Jew, indeed the Jews of all of Europe, were thunderstruck and disillusioned. Where was the "modern era" which the Pittsburgh Platform had promised that Jews would "deem it their duty to participate in?" The secularist German-Jewish newspaper *Der Morgen* painfully cried out in the dark days of 1938:

The ground on which our feet stand is shaken...

No wonder that many a one is seized by the fear that life is playing an incomprehensible game with him, and in his confusion he himself begins to think little of his life...

Who can help us bear this?...

We stand naked before our fate but thereby... we are... freed of the ballast of prejudices which narrowed our field of vision.²⁶

"Who can help us bear this?" Who indeed? Not pompous Geiger advocating that German Jews ignore the Damascus incident! Not the early Reformer David Einhorn proclaiming that Judaism only consisted of "belief in God... the belief in the innate goodness... of all things... the belief in one human family whose membership

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...will all participate in the bliss (of a future time). . ."²⁷ For what Jews supremely and desperately needed, as they descended into the depths of the Nazi hell, was something more than vague utopian phraseology. They needed their God. They needed His faith and His laws. Belatedly, the descendants of the Hamburg Templists began to realize the truth. Plunging ever deeper into the malestrom, German Jews responded to the inner yearnings of their eternal souls. The famous *C. V. Zeitung*, which had long embodied the hopes of the "Reformers" and helplessly believed, almost to the end, in the postulates of assimilation, finally could no longer restrain the "thirstings of its soul" after Jewishness and in 1938 wrote:

The power of community to bear the burden of unfolding history depends on the depth of recognition of its own experienced destiny. History cannot be doomed like a historic costume, not even in one's own community.

But if we realize in how many costumes we have traversed the space of history, we understand that we can cross the borderlines of epochs only as we cross them clearly as Jews — dressed not according to fashion but according to the experienced law of our existence.²⁸

So it seemed from this and other indications that German Jews were beginning to awaken from the slumber which the "Reformers" had imposed on them. Pitifully, they became aware of their existence as *Jews*, not as "monotheistic ethical-humanists." However, the hour for clear identification had long since passed. The eternal doctrines of God, Torah and Israel remained inaccessible to them. Sadly, the end closed in. Dachau, Treblinka, Bergen-Belsen and Auschwitz became their destination. There, the children of the Enlightenment were taught the bitter truth about mankind and its "unlimited potential for progress." Estimates place the number of German Jews sacrificed upon the altar of Hitler's secular racism at some four-fifths of the 1939 Jewish population or 170,000 out of 210,000. It was the most horrifying demonstration of the follies of the twin heresies of assimilation and "Reform." Yet today, a mere quarter of a century after the tragic events of the Third Reich, the

modern Jew continues to follow assorted pied pipers of spiritual suicide.

Besides embodying a program of universalist monotheism and thereby leading directly to the eventual assimilation of untold numbers of Jews, the "Reformers" also launched a frontal attack on almost all the doctrines and laws of the Jewish faith. To them nothing was sacred, and they set about to dismember the basic tenets of the Jewish faith with a zeal typical of the *philosophes*, their spiritual ancestors. First, they turned on Jewish customs, then on the Rabbinic laws, finally on the Bible and ultimately, in our own day, on God himself. The methods of true scholarship and rigorous logic were not known to most of the early "Reformers" and their intemperate dogmatism is evidenced in all their writings. They made no attempt to investigate the authenticity of the Bible or the historicity of the Sinai event. The arguments offered by innumerable Jewish philosophers for centuries to justify the truth of faith were, for the most part, never so much as dignified by an answer on the part of these "men of reason." Was the Torah true? Was its text reliable? Had God indeed spoken at Mount Sinai? Was the Rabbinical authority of the Mishnaic and Talmudic sages authentic? These were the questions that the "Reformers" should have been occupied with, for they are the central questions confronting any Jew at any time. Instead, the "Reformers" ignored the essential issue of faith versus doubt and concentrated their polemics on such nonsensical topics as: Are synagogue services esthetically pleasing? Do the ritual laws prevent Jews from entering gentile society? What is the "real" Judaism, that is "ethical" Judaism, as opposed to "ritual" Judaism? Which laws are the most inconvenient for the modern Jew? By dodging the key questions at stake, the "Reformers" were able to strip Judaism of everything that a conscientious deist could not have lived with.

In the Hamburg Temple, the following "reforms" were introduced: (1) German prayers were substituted for the Hebrew original in many parts of the service; (2) an organ and a choir accom-

panied the worship from the prayerbook changes, the "Friede" the following:

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panied the worship; (3) references to the land of Israel were omitted from the prayerbook. In 1848, as a rationale for these and similar changes, the "Friends of Reform" in the city of Worms offered the following:

We must uproot empty forms and create new institutions to house the spirit of Judaism. No longer must our lips pray for a return to Palestine, while at the same time the strongest bonds tie our souls to the German fatherland whose fate is inextricably interwoven with ours—for what is dear and precious to us is embraced by her. We should not mourn for the destruction of the Temple... for another fatherland has been ours for many years, one that has become most precious to us all. . . . We must no longer expose our little ones in religious school to a mass of ordinances. . . . We must no longer pray in a dead language when the word and sound of our German mother tongue are to us both understandable and attractive. These alone, therefore, are suited to lift us up to our creator.²⁹

Instead of following the only two courses of thought logically open to them: (1) establish proof from Jewish law itself that such "reforms" were permissible or (2) offer a clear-cut critique of the legitimacy of the law in question, the "Reformers" disappeared behind a smokescreen of flamboyant rhetoric of "new ages," "eras" and the like, and chose to dodge the basic issues involved. Actually they had no alternative. Were they to follow the first method mentioned above, they would have found themselves embroiled in deep Torah controversy with the learned Rabbis of their era, none of whom found any sanction for these innovations in Jewish law. Conversely, were they to reject the entire law *en masse*, they would have read themselves and their movement completely out of existence. For if Judaism was no more than myth, then why adhere to it? Confronted with a choice of this sort, the "Reformers" jumped for cover under the protective platitudes of the "age of Enlightenment."

Eventually though, the "Reformers" let the cat out of the

proverbial bag and they proceeded to train their sights directly on the Talmud,* the basic work of Torah Judaism. The Frankfort "Society of the Friends of Reform" was quite open about this as early as 1842. They wrote:

The collection of controversies, dissertations, and prescriptions commonly designated by the name Talmud possesses for us no authority either from the dogmatic or the practical standpoint.³⁰

In no uncertain terms the "Reformers," by deriding the Talmud, had literally knocked the supports from under their own faith. When the Rabbinic tradition was cast aside, the floodgates opened and, from that point on, the sky was the limit. The next point was the Bible itself. Those portions of God's revelation which offended the Reformers' sensibilities were to be dropped. The famed Pittsburgh Platform wrote of the Bible as merely

...reflecting the primitive ideas of its own age and at times clothing its conception of divine providence and justice dealing with man in miraculous narratives.³¹

Having consigned their God the role of an impotent Deity incapable of performing miracles, the Reformers proceeded to reject His laws. They wanted to eliminate all those Torah laws which, in the words of the Pittsburgh Platform, were "not adapted to the views and habits of modern civilization."³²

In fact, therefore, the "Reformers" found precious little in the Torah capable of satisfying the habits of such a reasonable age, or of appealing to their "enlightened" views. Thus:

...all such Mosaic and Rabbinical laws as regulate diet, priestly purity and dress... fail to impress the modern Jew with a spirit of [exalted] holiness; their observance in our days is oft rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation.³³

*See Chapter IV.

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With the publication of the Pittsburgh Platform, which had even shocked such a staunch defender of the "Reformist" heresy as the famous Isaac Mayer Wise with its total repudiation of everything Jewish, the ball game which Israel Jacobson had begun entered now its final innings. The "Reformers" had systematically torn down every doctrine basic to the Jewish faith. It appeared to most observers in those "crusading" days of the late nineteenth century that there was virtually nothing left for the "Reformers" to "reform." Was there anything remaining of the doctrines of the Torah faith for the "Reformers" to dismantle? Surprisingly, there was. Shortly after the close of the Pittsburgh conference "Rabbis" Kaufmann Kohler and Emil G. Hirsch began a journal entitled *The Jewish Reformer*, and it was there that they uncovered the seemingly last vestige of Judaism to be eradicated.

The Pittsburgh Platform had dodged the very crucial issue of whether God had revealed any of the "moral laws" which the "Reformers" for some mysterious reason had chosen, at that time, to accept. Was God, to the "Reformers," anything more than the "prime cause" of the deists? Did He in any way relate to things of this world? Typical of their German predecessors, the "scholars" gathered at Pittsburgh chose to ignore these ultimate, life-and-death questions. Instead, they vaguely spoke of their belief that

Judaism presents the highest conception of the God-idea as taught in our holy Scriptures and developed and spiritualized by the Jewish teachers. . .³⁴

Now, obviously trying to pin this statement down is extremely difficult. What precisely is meant by this "highest conception" business? Are all these "conceptions" of the "God-idea" (Why, pray tell, couldn't they have simply said God?) true? Authoritatively? Really? Eternally? By whose say-so? By God's? We are not told. Is the Bible the source of these conceptions? Only heaven knows, for in the next paragraph the Reformers, when discussing the Holy Books, write:

We recognize in the Bible the record of the consecration of

the Jewish people to its mission...and value it as the most potent instrument of religious and moral instruction.³⁵

Again, we notice the tendency to cloud the central issue with high-sounding talk containing little or no meaning. What is this "record of consecration"? Is it true? Why must one be "consecrated"? Did God call for this "mission" of religious and moral instruction? Did the Jewish people decide upon it themselves, out of the clear blue? Apparently this "conception" is not to be considered true in any ultimate sense of the term. The Jewish faith is described as a "grasp," a "conception," a "consecration" and the like. We are left in the dark as to whether all this "grasping" is true or false, Divinely revealed or invented by man.

This story of "Reform" pussyfooting on the central issue of religious faith sets the stage for the famous article in *The Jewish Reformer* which we just mentioned. In it, the entire basis for Jewish faith was swept away, as Dr. Samuel Hirsch openly denied that Judaism is a revealed religion. He wrote:

Revelation is a Christian and not a Jewish conception.

...every truth comes from heaven. A man proclaiming any truth will, when truly pious, not claim all the credit for himself, but avow that God made him find it.

...Supernatural revelation being a Christian and not a Jewish conception, I have the right to critically examine the Scriptures, and I heartily subscribe to the second article of the platform...³⁶

Finished. Or so it seemed. No revelation, just, to quote Hirsch, "religion [as] the result of evolution." No eternal laws. Nothing to observe. The "Reformers" had just about come to the end of their rope. They were left without a religion, locked in a morally relativistic universe, with a far-removed, disinterested God.

The curtain was slowly coming down on the "Reform" movement. Its members throughout the world remained the most apathetic, assimilationist elements of the Jewish people. Despite the eventual endorsement of nationalistic, secular Zionism in the well-known Columbus Platform in 1937, the ideological descendants of

Israel Jacobson continued their wholesale rejection of every doctrine basic to Judaism. Eventually the "Reformist" movement would "continue to adapt the teachings of the Torah" to the "basic needs" of "each age,"³⁷ and officially designate children born out of mixed marriages as Jews to be treated as such in their educational institutions, thereby totally obliterating all distinctions between Jew and non-Jew. In fact, this was not enough for a large number of "Reform" dissidents who recently left the Central Conference of American Rabbis to establish their own group, which openly and completely sanctioned mixed marriages.

In the nineteen-sixties and -seventies, with its masses totally alienated, several leaders of Reform thought joined the *avant-garde* theologians who were storming the heavens to eliminate the impotent "God" which their "enlightened" forerunners had imprisoned there. Some "Reformers" began to recast God as a pantheist, Hegelian life force! "Rabbi" Roland B. Gittelsohn, a leading exponent of this school of thought, wrote:

I am a naturalistic, humanistic theist. Naturalistic, because I believe that God inheres within nature, rather than operating upon it from outside itself. . . . Theist, because I am persuaded that our spiritual propensities and capacities are reflections of something very close to the crux of Ultimate Reality.³⁸

No "personal God" for "Rabbi" Gittelsohn. That would be "primitive." In his book entitled *Man's Best Hope*, he offers us his "advanced" view of the Creator:

. . . earlier man found it necessary to personify the forces about him in the universe. . . . We have progressed far beyond that point but still think too literally in terms of a Cosmic Person at a time when we should be capable of more abstract thought . . . we should now be able to conceive of God as Energy or Force or Intelligence rather than Person.³⁹

Later on in the same volume, we are told that the author does

"not believe" in miracles and, after a lengthy discussion, that God does not "hear our prayers." If the surprised reader is somewhat taken aback by "theology" of this sort, Gittelsohn concludes his startling book (widely acclaimed in Reform circles) by assuring one and all that the show has only begun:

There will come a day when our capacity to understand life and live it creatively will have advanced so far that even the concepts of this volume — so radical and disturbing to some — will be discarded as outgrown. The sun is up. The day has commenced. We soar on the wings of mornings.⁴⁰

It should be noted that Gittelsohn is by no means representative of a small element among modern-day "Reformers." He is widely acknowledged as one of the leading thinkers of the movement and, in fact, his textbook on Judaism is used widely in "Reform Hebrew Schools."

For Professor Alvin Reines of the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, the prime training ground for "Reform rabbis" and the theological center of the movement, the God of the Torah is viewed as nothing more than "the enduring possibility of being."⁴¹ Indeed, Reines feels that not only is Judaism not a religion of coherent beliefs and practices, but that it must be the *antithesis* of clear faith! He has written that modern Judaism must adhere to a strange doctrine which he dubs "polydoxy" and defines as standing in

... direct opposition to orthodoxy... in a polydoxy, with one exception, all opinions on the great themes of religion... are equally valid... the (polydox) religious institution can be coherently committed to only one belief: the affirmation of its members' individual freedom.

The ultimate commitment of the modern Jew... is to rationalism... the rationalism that turns to polydoxy when the faith of orthodoxy is gone.⁴²

Happily, not all "Reform" thinkers had decided to adopt the "people's religion" of the Coxes and Alitzers. There are many signs that a segment of the movement, sensing the spiritual bank-

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ruptcy around them, have begun to cast a yearning glance towards home; to God and the Torah. Herbert H. Rose wrote a strong-worded rebuttal to the above-quoted Reines "polydoxy" piece which seemed to indicate that at least some "Reformers" were coming close to the crux of their problem. He clearly spelled out the logical conclusions of the Reines approach:

...if freedom from any basic commandment is all we stand for, then indeed we stand for nothing, offer nothing, demand nothing and have no reason for existence.⁴³

Rabbi David Polish also gave voice to these "return to tradition" sentiments which some "Reformers" are evidencing of late when he wrote in an article, "The Case against Religious Anarchy":

This then is the challenge to Reform Judaism. We need the strength of faith, of survival — which a mitzvah system can provide. . .⁴⁴

However, despite these promising signs, the future of Reform appeared to look, on the whole, increasingly bleak. Ben Hamon described the difficulties involved in a "Reform" turn to the right in his report on the 1963 meeting of the leading Reform body in America, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, entitled "Reform Rabbis Debate Theology":

Reform Rabbis are interested in theology today because they know that they have little else to offer the cultured ethical man, and only a living relationship between God and Israel can justify the continued effort to remain Jewish. . . . The problem is that a serious religiosity would require a revolution. It would really alter their lives, their ministries, their congregations. They are relatively at ease in the status quo.⁴⁵

So, the "status quo" of the Gittelsohns and Reines's remains, and by so remaining has pushed the "Reform" movement close to the brink of total absurdity; an "Energy" who performs no miracles, hears no prayers and demands no practices, to be "served"* by

*Worshipped? Followed? Believed in? Energized?

Jews not obligated to believe anything, except that they may believe everything. "Man's best hope" was a pretty shallow one at that.

For Jews in the twentieth century, the weird doctrines of the "Reform" movement have accomplished little else besides serving to sever the link between the Jewish people and God. By eliminating both Creator and revelation from the Jewish faith, the very foundation of Judaism has been yanked away. As for the modern Jew, the whole house of his faith began to appear to be nothing more than the fossilized remains of a primitive persuasion. As the sociologist Peter Berger wrote in 1968:

The numerous pre- and proscriptions of orthodox Judaism are likely to appear as so many absurdities, unless they remain linked to a world view that includes the supernatural. Lacking this, despite all sorts of traditional loyalties and nostalgias, the whole edifice of traditional piety takes on the character of a museum of religious history. People may like museums, but they are reluctant to live in them.⁴⁶

Israel Jacobson's wish to see "the mist removed" and have Jew and Gentile "meet each other on one and the same road" was becoming, in the latter half of the twentieth century, a reality. However, the road was not that envisioned in Seesam in 1810, but that described in the tortured words of Albert Camus:

In this world rid of God and moral ideas man is now alone and without a master. From the moment when man no longer believes in God or immortality... begins the era of the outcasts, the exhausting search for justifications, the aimless nostalgia, "the most painful, the most agonizing question: that of the heart that asks itself, *Where will I ever be able to feel at home?*"...⁴⁷

Of course, in this, our short outline of the path traveled by the Jewish people from faith to agony over the past two hundred years, much has been left out. The effects of the Darwinian theories of evolution and their purported contradiction with traditional faith, the emergence of the "ideology" of "Conservative Judaism"

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which embodied every philosophy from the zaniest heresy to borderline Torah Judaism, the popularity of Zionist nationalism, the novel "morality" of the Freudian school, and many other supposedly overpowering persuasions would have to be detailed in a more thorough study. For our purposes, though, it is sufficient if the following points have by this time become clear: (1) The Jewish faith, that is, the beliefs and laws of the Torah, were constantly upheld by the Jewish people until the days of the Enlightenment. (2) The Enlightenment rejected the basics of faith not out of rigorous scholarship or logical philosophical precision, but from a largely naive and emotional world view. (3) In a similar manner, the Jewish heretics, the so-called "Reformers," cast aside their traditional faith, due to the prompting of long-since-discredited eighteenth-century modes of thought. (4) This removal of the spiritual from its former center-place in the Jewish nation has resulted in the apathy and anxiety of the modern Jew.

We have now arrived at the point where the choice confronting the modern Jew can be clearly spelled out. He has before him the three-fold path presented by the end of the so-called modern era. The first road is the easiest. It consists of drugging oneself with the mindless hedonism offered by our declining, amoral society. The Jew can follow this path of material pleasure and middle-class conformity, with food, drink and material diversions aplenty, with all searching for intellectual truth eliminated. If perchance he has some free time to meditate on his condition (highly unlikely) on weekends, he can forget his pangs of conscience by "going out," "taking care of things" (the house, the checkbook), or following the exploits of his favorites on the "tube." This bread-and-circuses Jew who blinds himself to the wreck of Western Civilization will inevitably "go down with the ship." His life will have been senseless to him and, as he contemplates his demise from some nursing-home bed, he will agonize as to what it all meant and, without finding an answer, die.

The second road is to follow modern philosophy to its logical conclusion and declare all values, truth, morals, ethics and faiths

to be totally subjective. This is the path of a Kafka and a Beckett, and it ends in the torment of nihilistic existentialism.

The third path is to reconsider the reasoning behind the alteration of their course which the Jewish people took in the nineteenth century. It consists of probing the claims of God and His faith. This road, of course, is a highly difficult one to follow. It remains, however, the only rational alternative to the directions previously outlined. Well-beaten though it is, having been traversed by millions of Jews over thousands of years, it remains surrounded by a forbidding aura to many moderns. They would do well to remember God's own words in the Torah:

And the Lord shall scatter you among the peoples. . . . And there you shall serve gods, the work of men's hands. . . . But from there, you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him, if you will search after Him with all your heart and all your soul; in your distress, when all these things are come upon you, in the end of days, then you will return to the Lord your God, and hear His voice; the Lord your God is a merciful God; He will not fail you. . .⁴⁸

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A man seeks the truth by the unaided effort of reason and is disappointed; it is offered him by faith and he accepts; and having accepted, he finds that it satisfies his reason.

ETIENNE GILSON (1884—)

. . . the best believers are those who believe because of tradition and also through their own reasoning. That is the meaning of our prayer, "Our God and God of our fathers," God is our God because we know Him to be so and because our fathers have taught us so.

R. ISRAEL BAAL SHEM TOV (1700–1768),
founder of Chasidism

If we submit everything to reason, our religion will have nothing in it mysterious or supernatural. If we violate the principles of reason, our religion will be absurd and ridiculous.

BLAISE PASCAL (1623–1662)

"Where is the dwelling of God?"

So asked the Rabbi of Kotzk, Poland, Menachem Mendel, of a group of learned men who were visiting him.

Scoffingly, they replied, "What an absurd question! Do we not know that the 'whole world is full of his glory'?"

Slowly and sharply the Rabbi gave a different answer to his own question:

"God dwells wherever man lets him in."

OR HA-GANUZ

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The reader who has steadily persevered to this point in the text is probably anxiously waiting for a clear-cut verification of the truths of the Torah. Clearly the thrust of what has gone before has been of a basically negative character. Therefore, the need for a presentation of the much-mentioned "alternative" is obvious. However, there must be one further delay before we turn from critical examination to positive articulation. This detour will take us off the clearly-lit road of empirical investigation and analysis which we have been travelling for two chapters now and lead us into the somewhat hazier, although no less real, area of the existence and meaning of the Jewish soul.

It is a readily observable fact that no matter how far a modern Jew strays from the mooring of his faith, he almost invariably continues to feel pangs of attachment and yearning towards the persuasion of his birth. We are all aware of Jews whose sole relationship with their Judaism is maintained by an annual visit to a synagogue on *Yom Kippur* or a sizable contribution to the United Jewish Appeal. There is actually a distinct group of *mitzvoth* which the alienated Jew in a surprisingly number of cases steadfastly performs. Be it hearing the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*, fasting on *Yom Kippur*, lighting candles on *Chanukka*, conducting a *seder* on *Pesach* or reciting the *kaddish* (memorial prayer) for departed relatives, the twentieth-century Jew persists in performing a few, however token and perfunctory, observances of his faith. Beyond this, there is the further inexplicable fact that, as Jacob Neusner

writes, "Above all, most (American Jews) regard the fact that they are Jewish as bearing great significance." Considering the totally secular orientation of most of these Jews, the question confronts us as to why they continue in this obedience to ritual law and proclamation of their Jewish identity for which their minds can clearly offer no adequate rationale.

A second interesting and also puzzling fact is the ever-increasing number of Jews, most of them young, in their teens and twenties, who have returned to the faith of their forefathers and adhere to it in all its ramifications. These "returnees," as they are called, are not confined to any specific geographical, psychological or educational background. From young intellectuals with their newly acquired post-graduate degrees to youngsters barely entering adolescence, there is a rising tide of young Jews turning to the truths of the Torah. Why, in spite of all the intellectual and emotional currents of our day, do these young people counter-react and proceed to swim against the secular stream?

Admittedly, a non-believer could offer a whole cartload of temporal explanations for the phenomena described above. Sentimentality, childhood memories, a sense of belonging and the like could, of course, cause the modern Jew to seek to sample the taste of his venerable faith. Likewise, in the case of youth, adolescent rebellion, an inability to maturely face up to the complexities of life and other emotional factors could be behind the surprising "returnee" statistics. Without doing any damage to the nature of the empirical evidence we could very easily find many logically satisfactory explanations of the obviously deep-felt affinity which Jews possess for their faith. We could similarly ascribe the joy of *Simchath Torah* in the Moscow Synagogue to re-awakened feelings of Jewish nationalism. The tears shed by totally irreligious Israeli soldiers at the Western Wall in Jerusalem could, indeed, have been caused by a combination of battle fatigue and patriotic enthusiasm, and so on.

However, there remains one other explanation of all this seemingly puzzling behavior on the part of alienated Jews everywhere.

It may appear a bit far-fetched to many moderns, but it will carry much weight with those who have not reduced their spiritual life to the level of a Baron d'Holbach. If for just a moment we can detach ourselves from the shallow materialism which distorts our thinking, if for one fleeting second we can acknowledge the possibility—at least the *possibility*—of other than deterministic explanations of the human situation, then a fairly credible reason behind the Jew's yearning for his faith emerges.

The great saints and mystics of all traditional faith have consistently testified to the pronounced tendency of almost all human beings to seek a sense of divine order in their lives. Rare, indeed, is the civilization or culture, or even individual nation, which has constituted itself without some sort of sacred substructure at its foundation, as painstakingly documented by Professor Eric Voegelin in his ongoing *magnum opus*, *Order and History*. The famous sociologists Emile Durkheim and Max Weber constantly emphasized that religion is one of the basic component parts in any enduring human community. In our own time, Robert Nisbet, a noted student of sociological cause and effect, has reiterated that faith is a prerequisite for man in his "quest for community." There appears to be a basic need deeply embedded in the innermost psyche of man to search for and discover some sense of the Divine.

Now, as we examine this clearly documented yearning, we can approach it either as dogmatic secularists and therefore in severely limited fashion, or as open-minded men of faith. That is, we can either state the obvious empirical fact that man seeks God, that men have always sought God, as a sociological statement and leave it at that, in which case we would be incapable of offering any reason why this tendency should be so pronounced. Of course we could venture to say that a mysterious force named "human nature," or its equally enigmatic female counterpart "mother nature," has deemed to make it so. Now, should we ask the somewhat impudent question as to precisely who this fellow "human nature" actually is, and why he has uniformly guided the desires of the hearts of men down through the centuries, our secular

sociologist would be hard put to find an answer. Perhaps he would tell us that the evolutionary foresight of old, benevolent "nature" realized in some pre-historic era that religion would be a necessary component trait in the soul (sorry, the secular sociologist would have to say brain or instinct) of mankind. Of course, the only problem with this "mother nature" business (much as one must confess to have developed a very fond personal liking for the old lady and her prophetic feats of loving-kindness and compassion, throughout the ages, as testified by biologists, geologists, anthropologists and others) is that it involves begging the real question, the ultimate question. One may speak of the "provisional care of mother nature" or the "benevolent tendencies of the universal life-force" from today till the end of days, but in the final analysis nothing will have been accomplished. By investing what is purported to be a merely mechanical process with personality traits, with loving, protective, sociologically astute personality traits, the secular students of society are simply demonstrating their own intellectual inability to discuss what obviously are non-empirical wonders.

Religious people, on the other hand, have always known that God — wise, all-knowing, compassionate God — created the "earth and its inhabitants." Furthermore, they maintain that this same God implanted in the souls (yes, here we can say souls) of all mankind a keen sense of lack, of emptiness, when He is excluded from their lives. This would, of course, provide a satisfactory answer to all the seemingly unfathomable heretofore-stated facts: of Jewish ritual observances among the alienated, of the "returnees" group, of the historical facts as documented by Voegelin, of the sociological facts as testified to by Weber, Durkheim, and Nisbet, and so on. Now, perhaps the reader is thinking that, indeed, the religious answer does seem to offer meaning to all the aforementioned puzzling phenomena, but it is not empirically verifiable. We do not know it to be true, in the sense that we know that two plus two equals four. It is a sound theory, the skeptics add, it certainly seems to outdistance all other explanations, but it

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is not, and by nature cannot be, called a fact. Granted, for the moment we ask no more. All that we ask is that, for the time being, the reader does not dismiss the possibility of supra-temporal explanations of the human condition as mere sentimental fantasy. In Jewish mysticism in particular we find great stress placed upon the *essential truthfulness* of a Jew's longing for his God and his faith. Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov (Poland), author of the famous work *Bney Yissachar*, was one of the foremost proponents of this tradition during the period of faith-crisis which confronted nineteenth-century Polish Jewry. He wrote:

Abraham, our father, implanted in the eternal Jewish soul the ability to believe the belief of a believer . . . without proof or investigation. . . . God did this because of His love for us.

So, our souls seem to yearn for God; but at times our minds stand in the way of this yearning. We have misgivings. We experience "a dark night of the soul." We fear our feelings of faith to be groundless. Such misgivings are typical of the human situation. The deepest-held convictions are often agonized over. Since this is so, it is wise not to place too much hope in any one argument, discussion or experience used to approach God. There are so many variables in the human experience that it is extremely prudent never to "put all one's eggs in one basket." What can be done, though, is to view one's faith as a result of the cumulative evidence and God's mercy as manifested in the feelings of belief inherent in the Jewish soul. Fortunately, Jewish philosophers and theologians throughout the ages have provided us with many and varied ways of finding Divine truth in our lives. Their arguments are so broad in scope and so rich in detail that we can say that for the most part almost everything of consequence, or at least of consequence to us as twentieth-century men, has already been said in some way or another. What we shall attempt to do in the ensuing pages is simply outline in brief sketches some of the ways in which men have found God throughout history with their heads and with their hearts. A complete summary of all the arguments in favor of the God of

orthodox faith (or specifically, for our interests, God as presented by the Torah and Jewish tradition) would run to many volumes. I have tried to do the best I could under the limitations of a single volume, actually a single chapter. The reader is advised to consult the references mentioned in the notes for further details.

Some readers will, of course, find many of the forthcoming arguments inconclusive, incomplete, or logically faulty in some way. This is to be expected. Historical proofs appeal to one frame of mind, while the classical teleological or cosmological arguments are found compelling by another. Existentialist explorations of an orthodox religious nature are very popular in our age, while the inner-moral-law reasoning still claims many adherents. In sum, there are many ways to arrive at the God of our fathers and His revelation which do justice to our sense of reason as well as to our emotional wellsprings.

Before beginning with the actual arguments themselves, it should be pointed out that not all of the "proofs" that follow lead one directly to the God of Torah Judaism. Some are simply demonstrations of the existence of some All-Wise, Supreme Being — the deistic God, if you will — while others do indeed seem to indicate the merciful-moral God of orthodox faith. Finally, still others do indeed point toward the God of Judaism.

In ordering the following topics, an ever-narrowing arrangement has been followed. First, the deistic, then the overall orthodox, and lastly the distinctly Jewish apologetics are offered. In addition, while the endeavor has been made to answer some potential criticisms of each proof, the reader is free to feel somewhat short-changed if he finds his own pet question answered insufficiently or perhaps not even mentioned. Such is the nature of a controversial work that, unless one is a haughty dogmatist, a confession of the realistic inability of one man to assemble all the relevant data is fitting. So again, I openly admit my own sins of omission and commission and hope that the reader will avail himself of the cumulative effect of all the arguments taken as a whole, rather than those individual proofs which he may find strained.

Faith in God and His revelation is, in fact, commanded by the Bible itself. As such the lack of faith of an individual Jew (depending, of course, upon the mitigating circumstances of environment and inherent personality characteristics) must be viewed as something more than a lack of philosophical clarity. A lack of faith (as shocking as it may seem to the conditioned modernist) is, in fact, a moral failing, an act of rebellion against God. The nature of the Jewish soul is such that it is capable of receiving the gift of faith from God without suitable evidence or even, if need be, in spite of seemingly convincing signs to the contrary. Obviously faith must be accessible to every Jew regardless of his theological acumen and intellectual ability. It would be a virtual impossibility for all Jews to probe the case for Torah Judaism adequately before accepting the reality of God. Thus, the reader is cautioned that the following arguments represent only a portion of a Jew's faith relationship. They can be of assistance in the rediscovery of the truths of Torah Judaism, but finally a Jew is quite capable of accepting the "yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven" through God's mercies and the promptings of his own soul. Thus, one's approach to faith is not merely an intellectual endeavor but a profoundly religious one. Prayer and repentance are, therefore, just as relevant to "the road back" as is a rational explanation of the truths of the Torah. As Rabbi Moshe of Kobryn, Russia, a chassidic leader of the nineteenth century, often commented:

A Jew must be aware of the fact that in the inner recesses of his soul he does, indeed, believe in God. His lack of conscious awareness of this fact is due to the fact that his soul has been covered by the clouds of forgetfulness. A Jew must believe that he does, in fact, believe.

THE COSMOLOGICAL PROOF

To attempt to prove the existence of God by pointing to the existence of the world has been one of the most popular ways in which metaphysicians of all faiths have sought to demonstrate the reality of a Creator. In its simplest form, the cosmological argument is

used by believers everywhere. Just stop to ask Mr. Average Believer why he adheres to the doctrine of a God who created the world and he will invariably reply, "Well somebody or something *had* to have gotten things started." In so replying, Mr. Average Believer has very neatly summed up the thoughts of the literally thousands of theologians who have delved into this argument in depth.

Now, I am well aware that the dominant trend in modern philosophy is to degrade the logical persuasiveness of the classical cosmological argument. Beginning with Hume and Kant, there has arisen a whole school of thought which seems to suggest that this classical proof of God's existence no longer holds water. I shall soon return to these various critiques; in the meantime, let us briefly state the argument itself.

Rabbi Sa'adya Gaon of tenth century Babylonia was probably the first Jewish thinker to present the cosmological argument in coherent form. In his famous work of Jewish philosophy, *Sefer Emunoth veDei'oth* (*The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*), he spelled out the basics of this argument when he wrote that all of the physical world which we perceive was at one time non-existent;* it came into being from nothing; therefore there must be a Prime Cause which brought about the existence of material things.¹ Maimonides in his famous *Guide to the Perplexed* also uses this reasoning and broadens it to include the phenomenon of motion, which is always produced by an earlier motion, leading us eventually back to a Prime Mover.² Rabbi Bachya ibn-Pakuda in his work of Jewish philosophy and ethics, *Chovoth haLevavoth* (*Duties of the Heart*), puts the matter in succinct form when he writes:

(1) a thing does not make itself; (2) causes are limited in number; and since their number is limited they must have a First Cause...the inference from these premises...[is] that the world has a Creator...³

*Earlier in the same volume, R. Sa'adya offers various arguments against the theory that matter has always been in existence.

Of course, the position that empirical existence be measured from it. However, the partial truth of reality as a medieval advocate of Thomas Aquinas, etc.

... even this Thomism in itself does not deal with the metaphysical primary act of Thomas recognizing have begun to either answer or answer any question exist intellectually that all the matter in his mind is not not mean anything

To this question by answering "no" not be the beginning call common sense sophers, no thing is a real bridge

In recent years the eyes of certain of the Second Law of Thermodynamics that the energy which progressively distributed in regions is flowing to a point when created have ended long ago and astronomer A.S.

Of course, the cosmological proof bases itself upon the supposition that empirical reality as it appears to us is, indeed, real. If existence be mere fantasy, then we obviously can deduce nothing from it. However, classical philosophers rarely discussed the essential truth of reality at all. G. K. Chesterton, writing of that famous medieval advocate of various forms of cosmological argument, Thomas Aquinas, explains why:

...even those who appreciate the metaphysical depth of Thomism in other matters have expressed surprise that he does not deal at all with what many now think the main metaphysical question: whether we can prove that the primary act of recognition is real. The answer is that St. Thomas recognized instantly what so many modern skeptics have begun to suspect rather laboriously; that a man must either answer that question in the affirmative or else never answer any question, never ask any question, never even exist intellectually, to answer or to ask... If a man feels that all the moments of his own mind are meaningless, then his mind is meaningless, and he is meaningless; and it does not mean anything to attempt to discover his meaning...

To this question "Is there anything?" St. Thomas begins by answering "Yes"; if he began by answering "No," it would not be the beginning, but the end. That is what some of us call common sense. Either there is no philosophy, no philosophers, no thinkers, no thought, no anything; or else there is a real bridge between the mind and reality...⁴

In recent years the cosmological argument has been bolstered in the eyes of certain thinkers by the scientific principle known as the Second Law of Thermodynamics. This law describes the fact that the energy which is to be found in the universe is being progressively distributed on an even basis, that is, the heat of warmer regions is flowing to cooler areas. Now if there was not a certain point when created being suddenly began, then this process would have ended long ago, matter being eternal. The famous physicist and astronomer A. S. Eddington was convinced that the fact that

the energy of the cosmos is running down, so to speak, is ample evidence that at one time it had been "wound up."⁵

Now, as to the afore-mentioned objections to the cosmological argument, I hesitate to pursue them in depth here. This work is not specifically aimed at those skilled in the intricacies of theological debates. For the more scholarly-minded reader interested in quieting any intellectual qualms of a Kantian or Humian nature, I heartily recommend a work that would have widely been hailed as a philosophical classic in a saner age, *Beyond the New Theism* by Germaine Grisez.⁶ It takes on the diversified arguments against this and other traditional proofs of God's existence and deals with them in a thorough scholarly manner. Grisez pretty much turns the tables on those attacking the traditional proofs, but if the reader should still remain unmoved, I have listed in the notes following this chapter several recent books and articles which put forth several refined versions of the cosmological argument.⁷

In any event, as the reader can plainly see, the cosmological proof is neither a tightly shut case as once thought, or a crippled example of faulty reasoning as some moderns have been led to believe. Instead, it is just one of the many visible landmarks which serve to point man towards God.

THE TELEOLOGICAL PROOF

Probably one of the most persuasive of all the arguments pointing to the merciful, all-knowing God of orthodox faith is that known as the teleological proof. Briefly stated, the teleological proof argues from the design, planning and purpose in nature (most of it being of a compassionate nature) to the existence of an infinitely intelligent, merciful Creator. This argument is advanced in great depth by the aforementioned Rabbi Bachya ibn Pakuda in his major work, *The Duties of the Heart*. There he examines the virtually unchronicable detail to be seen in all facets of the created universe. For example, he writes, we should consider the planning involved in the human body: the intricate systems of digestion, circulation and respiration, the bone and muscular

structure perfectly co-ordinated, the blood with its balance between white and red cells, the complex processes of hearing, seeing, smelling and chewing, the unfathomable complexities of the brain; all these and more give ample testimony to the existence of a Supreme Planner.⁸

The animal world is no less amazing and it is the study of zoology, the variety and detail of millions of life forms, which has led many a man to God; and the same is true of botany, astronomy and meteorology. A. Creasy Morrison, one-time president of the New York Academy of Science, expressed these same thoughts in his well-known *Reader's Digest* article entitled "Seven Reasons Why a Scientist Believes in God." He wrote:

... so many exacting conditions are necessary for life on the earth that they could not possibly exist in proper relationship by chance. The earth rotates on its axis 1,000 miles an hour; if it turned at 100 miles an hour, our days and nights would be ten times as long as now, and the hot sun would likely burn up our vegetation each long day...

Again, the sun, source of life, has a surface temperature of 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit, and our earth is just far enough away so that this "eternal fire" warms us just enough and not too much!...

Life... designs every leaf of every tree, and colors every flower. Life is a musician and has taught each bird to sing its love song, the insects to call to one another in the music of their multitudinous sounds. Life is a sublime chemist, giving taste to fruits and spices, and perfume to the rose, changing water and carbonic acid into sugar and wood, and, in so doing, releasing oxygen that animals may have the breath of life.

Behold an almost invisible drop of protoplasm... This... mist-like droplet holds within itself the germ of life, and has the power to distribute this life to every living thing, great and small. Nature did not create life; fire-blistered rocks and a saltless sea could not meet the necessary requirements.

Who, then has put it there? ... It is scientifically ... true, as the Psalmist said: *The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork.*⁹

Can the atheist or agnostic maintain his dogmas in the face of evidence of this sort? V. H. Mottram offered some amazing statistics in his powerful article, "Scientific Basis for Belief in God." He wrote that the odds against a "chance manufacture" of one of the most elementary of created materials, the protein molecule, would be staggering. He placed them at 10^{160} to 1. Mottram also estimated that at least 10^{243} years would be needed for such an event to happen on this planet and it would require sextillion sextillion times more material than is believed to exist in the entire universe.¹⁰

Speaking from a Jewish point of view, Rabbi Avigdor Miller gives voice to the above sentiment:

... the blindness caused by habit is one of the chief enemies of mankind. The man who is able to view the world as if seeing it for the first time is the man who achieves greatness ... When you come home and see upon your table a loaf of bread, you should be amazed ... From this gritty and inedible soil has come forth a soft, appetizing loaf of bread! The grains that were planted possessed in their tiny units such vastly complicated chemical and physical engineering that enabled them to transform lifeless earth into the vital and precious bread, which in turn has the ability to become the semen and the egg-cells from which men will be created. ...¹¹

Rabbi Elyakim Getz of Ostroh, Russia (d. 1885), a famous chasidic teacher, once commented on the words in the Book of Psalms, "How great are Your works, O God, how infinitely deep are Your thoughts! A man devoid of reason does not understand, nor does the fool recognize this" (Psalms 92:6-7). He said, humorously, that God's thoughts must indeed be deep if He could create fools of this sort, incapable of recognizing the greatness of His works.

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The rabbi had hit upon the crux of the matter, for the non-believer is usually a somewhat strange creature totally immune to the evidence of creation and the physical world. C. S. Lewis once commented on this insistence upon one's lack of faith in spite of all the signs pointing to God. "Really," he said, "a young atheist cannot guard his faith too carefully. Dangers lie in wait for him on every side."¹² In sum, the teleological argument is extremely cogent and capable of influencing almost anyone but the totally ideologized secularist.

THE "ORDER" PROOF

After having viewed the system of infinite order which characterizes the physical universe as an indication of God's existence, we can now turn to a related, though somewhat less classical line of argument. Usually associated with religious existentialists, this proof maintains that the indications of God which individuals receive from their own sense of the inherent orderliness of reality is not the result of empirical thinking, as are the cosmological and the teleological points. On the contrary, the sources of the "order" proof lie in the ordinary, everyday awareness of the human soul. Every person, with the exception of the mentally disordered, feels the overwhelming comfort of reality as reassurance. That is, we all feel that things are in some way the way they should be, somehow all right.

Many younger readers may recall the sadly comical character of *Superman* comics called "Bizarro." This charming creature was portrayed as a sort of anti-"Superman," and he hailed from a planet populated by a race of "Bizarro" men, women, children, and animals. The distinguishing feature of "Bizarro" life was its total bizarreness. On that strange planet everything was reversed, weird, and unpredictable. Buildings were constructed upside down, mice chased cats, heroism was a shameful act, cowardice was the highest virtue, births were mourned, deaths celebrated, etc., etc. Our own world stands in stark contrast to that of the "Bizarros." In our world, there is a strong aura of trust, reliance, a profound

awareness of the essential orderliness of existence. We feel in ourselves that, for example, the mother comforting a child against the fears of dark, telling him not to be afraid, is giving voice to a truism, not a fanciful myth. Now, in the Godless universe of the secular materialists there is simply no logic to prompt these feelings of essential orderliness. If man is no more than a meaningless conglomeration of evolutionary forces, if the universe is no more than the senseless result of changing matter, if the ultimate destination of every human being is eternal oblivion, then it is foolish to feel comfortable in such an inhospitable existence. In the nonsense universe of the atheist, the best one can "hope" (a strange word for a non-believer) for is a stoic resignation to the depressing "sound and fury" of a meaningless life. If there is no other life beyond the merely physical, if there is no purpose to living, then the child's terror of the dark is the truth, and the parent's loving words—lies.

At this juncture, some readers may be saying, "Alas, our lives possess no more reality or order than those of the inhabitants of the 'Bizarro' world." To which one can only say, if you feel that way, if you really feel and *live* that way, that is with a sense of depressing resignation, then, dear reader, I can only offer you my sympathies over your truly heart-rending state of existence and urge that you totally ignore the present argument. Proceed to examine those following. However, to the vast majority of people reading this page, to whom life and love and trust are, at times, vividly experienced, I ask that they carefully probe their ultimate rationale for experiencing and relying upon such feelings. In the final analysis, either one acknowledges a moral, loving God or one is forced to view life with a feeling of total helplessness.

THE "RELIABILITY OF ORDER" PROOF

Closely related to the sense of order which men feel in their own soul is the awareness of the essential reliability of external order. All sciences base their formulas and propositions on the seemingly groundless assumption that life, matter, elements, atoms will con-

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Is there any reason to assume the rationality of the universe, that reality should follow fixed laws based on unchanging mathematics? Clearly, if the world were not governed by an ultimately rational Being, then we would have no reason to trust things physical. However, we all do just that. Thus, the most dogmatic atheist believes that when he turns on a light, electricity will flow in the expected manner. He expects electric power to be generated by his simple act. He does not entertain any fears that a South American anaconda will appear in his living room. In sum, everyone trusts the world, and therefore, however unknowingly, trusts its God.

THE "ORDERING OF EXISTENCE" PROOF

We have just finished pointing out that human beings feel that both their souls and the physical world around them are coherent and ordered. In life, all civilizations translate these feelings, via symbols, rituals, myths, doctrines, etc., into an ordered communal existence. Obviously, humanity's historical tendency to establish ordered social realities is the outgrowth of the inner feelings of intelligibility which we all possess. Anarchical, nihilistic chaos should be the logical result of the nonsense universe postulated by the materialist. For if values are mere illusions, then there remains no logical basis to subjugate the inherent hedonistic tendencies of man to the false and fanciful proscriptions of civil law. On the contrary, though, the history of man points to a profound propensity to produce structured, value-symbolizing systems. As

that great student of world history, Professor Eric Voegelin, has written:

The order of history emerges from the history of order. Every society is burdened with the task, under its concrete conditions, of creating an order that will endow the fact of its existence with meaning in terms of ends divine and human.¹³

Why do men constantly struggle to set up a suitable order in their individual and communal lives? Could this basic human trait not be a reflection of some inner truth? Do we have any other truly suitable explanation? Is not our urge toward social order symbolically a realization of our awareness of a Higher Order?

THE "REALITY OF SELF" PROOF

Coming fast on the heels of the last few arguments is the famous "reality of self" proof, sometimes associated with Augustine. We have attempted to demonstrate until now that man feels his own sense of being as well as the world around him to be orderly, and he therefore seeks to establish order in society. However, we have overlooked the one basic feeling which is in reality the only starting point for any discussion of man. (See the quote from Chesterton in Chapter I.) Man fervently believes himself to "be." Every human being, except for some arm-chair philosophers, is convinced that his own experience is a fact, indisputable and unquestionable. We do not consider our lives to be fantasies of our imaginations or someone else's or deceptive in any such demoniac way. We consider our lives to be real. Is there any basis for this feeling other than the assumption of an eternally true God, who guarantees us the reality of our existence?

THE "UNIVERSAL ASSENT" PROOF

All our previously mentioned arguments, with the exception of the first two, lead us eventually to the popular "argument from universal assent." The argument is brief, and though not logically overpowering it may carry some weight. Briefly, it goes some-

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thing like this: Almost all human beings from the dawn of time to the present day have believed in some form of Deity. The seemingly "universal" assent to this controversial proposition lends much weight to our considering it to be truthful. For example, if 99.9 percent of the people who saw Ali beat Foreman testify to the fact of the Muslim's victory, we can rest fairly well assured that the former Kentuckian did indeed win. We could rationally disallow any contrary testimony as patently absurd. In a similar vein, the majority of human beings who have confronted life on this planet have responded with some sort of religious response. Could we not, therefore, reasonably conclude that their response is basically accurate? Admittedly open to various criticisms, the "universal assent" argument may be helpful in conjunction with others in leading one to God.

THE "FEELING OF DEPENDENCE" PROOF

We are now back again in the world of inner proof, as opposed to the outer proof of the "universal assent" argument. To find God in the depths of one's soul is certainly no less rational than to find him in the physical world. Both man and the world are part of the complete experience of life; the "total cognition of faith," as one thinker has called it, must have recourse to both if it is to relate to all aspects of the human situation.

The need of human beings to rely, depend upon or have recourse to some transcendent Source has been pointed out by many religious thinkers. The inherent weakness of man and his need for eternal support are strong evidence of a Creator. The President of Morehouse College, Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, summed up this argument in a beautiful article entitled, "Why I Believe There Is a God":

I believe there is a God because man is finite, weak and frail and he is always seeking strength and support from some source beyond himself. The strongest man physically is relatively weak. He seeks other aids to strengthen him. The wisest man is ignorant of most things and doesn't know all

there is to know about anything. Man is a creature, and in a crisis situation—such as ultimate sickness, disease and death—we are all equally helpless, whether rich or poor, high or low, learned or unlearned. So each man relies on other people and things to gain strength: friends, the family, the race, the state and nature itself.

But none of these things is strong enough to satisfy man's desire for security. He longs for something which these cannot give. He may not admit it, but he yearns for a power stronger than man, stronger than the nation. He yearns for God.¹⁴

THE "NUMINOUS" PROOF

This proof belongs forever to the famous German scholar, Rudolph Otto. He documented that humanity has always experienced a feeling of supernatural awe and dread, or the "numinous" as he called it, when contemplating the Force or forces that rule the universe. The historical documentation of this is supplied in Otto's classic work, *The Idea of the Holy*.¹⁵ However, for our purposes it is sufficient to say that mankind has always feared some sort of extra-temporal source, beyond his own realm of being, with a sense of mysterious dread. In addition almost every individual seems to have had an experience of this sort at one time or another. Now these feelings of extra-terrestrial terror could of course be a mass delusion of humanity. Granted. However, they could also very well be "the beginning of wisdom, which is the fear of the Lord" (Psalms 110: 10).

THE "HUMOROUS" PROOF

This proof would best be called "the proof from our sense of humor," but we shall defer to the rhyme of "humorous" and "numinous" and place them in juxtaposition. Everyone will agree that rhymes, jokes, jesting, and the like do indeed exist. Some things *are* actually funny. Now why we laugh at funny things is, when examined in depth, no laughing matter.

We laugh because in some small way our concepts of life have

become for a fleeting moment somewhat incongruous. The President steps out of an airplane and falls on his face, the pitcher throws the pick-off attempt into the box seats, the burro sits down and refuses to budge, and "God Bless America" saves the Flyers again. All these incidents cause us to smile because our sense of life, of man and men, has in some incongruous way been mocked. From where do we derive our sense of normalcy, such that deviations from it are thought funny? Why do we find a slight mockery of life to be humorous? *Does laughter have any meaning to the materialist?*

The man of faith can laugh, because his life and that of his fellowman are basically sane and ordered. The man of faith can laugh because he considers man's present condition to be a passing one; and he views himself, replete with human imperfections, contradictions, and frivolity, as a creature of God, who is absolute and perfect. The incongruity of Creator and creature is the source of his sense of humor. Both Sergeant Bilko and Ralph Kramden would be sad caricatures of our hopeless existence if not for our feelings of the basic joy and eternity of the human condition. As John Sheridan once wrote:

If death is not a beginning as well as an end, [and] human suffering [be] the vindictive power of irresistible, impersonal forces, then there is no basis for hope, no logical explanation of laughter. If death is the end of the story, we are one with the amoeba, and our laughter has no more meaning than spittle on the lips of fools.¹⁶

THE "PLAY" PROOF

The proof from play, as well as our humorous proof and some of the proofs from order, fall under the category of what has been labeled by Professor Peter Berger as "inductive proofs." As we have pointed out before, this sort of proof moves outward from some form of universal experience of man to make certain points about God. Included in this category of arguments is the fascinating argument from human play.

All human societies engage in some sort of play. It is a tendency well-documented by sociologists. However, the rationale behind human play can only be understood when some considerations of eternity and transcendence are allowed into the discussion. The process of play is one whereby an individual steps out of the time and reality of standardized and material society into a separate zone of existence where life, so to speak, stands still. The 17,007 dedicated but perennially disappointed faithful, who enter Madison Square Garden in Manhattan to cheer on that frustrating hockey team, the Rangers, are for all practical purposes leaving the absurd world of the determinist-materialist between the hours of 7:30 and 10:00. They enter a world tinged with the genuine joy, the genuine heartbreak, the timelessness of childhood. Death is unknown in the consciousness of this playful universe. All that matters is that "J.D.!, J.D.!" should resound from the rafters, and that the Broadway Blues should win.

Is there any rational justification for play? Could we justify our total involvement in the seemingly mythical joys and sadnesses of games on the basis of an empirical determinism? By what means do we rid ourselves of all sense of material reality when we engage in or watch play? Are we not simply stepping into a basically different framework of human experience, a somewhat other-worldly zone? Granted, all our feelings of transcendence experienced during play periods could be illusory. However, could they not be a distant reminder that man is destined for a time when "then it will be a happiness of eternity"?¹⁷

THE "HOPE" PROOF

"I am working in order to provide security for my children."

"I hope to maintain my honesty in the face of temptation."

"I hope to have courage in the face of danger."

Statements such as these are uttered daily. They embody two characteristics of the human being: his self-sacrifice for posterity and his unspoken prayers. I have included both of these inner feelings in one general category, that known as hope. The atheist-

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materialist has no reason to give of himself for his descendants' sake or to wish to experience moral success or to avoid failure. Only the believing man has reason to long for something to occur after his own death, or to wish to maintain his moral integrity. Only the believing man can be said rationally to "hope." As Peter Berger expresses it:

... religion vindicates the gestures in which hope and courage are embodied in human action.¹⁸

THE "PUNISHMENT" PROOF

Human beings seem to be repulsed by tales of the monstrously evil. They react with a revulsion and an anger so deep that normal civil and governmental means of punishment appear incapable of soothing their feelings. A Hitler, a Stalin, a Mao Tse-Tung—our mind boggles when contemplating the gigantic proportions of the horrors which these men have inflicted on mankind. For the secular rationalist, this loathing, this indomitable hatred, is meaningless. Why should he hate Hitler so? In the first place, as the secular behaviorist would tell us, his personality was shaped by factors completely beyond his control. In the second place, as the secular educationalist would tell us, Hitler could easily have been rehabilitated and sent back to Vienna a changed man. In the third place, as the secular criminologist would tell us, Hitler's punishment would serve no realistic purpose. It would not bring his twelve million victims back to life. And so on. Yet the human mind recoils from all this rationalization of the non-believing.

As humans we demand that the perpetrator of grotesque evil be punished. Both our hearts and minds reject offhand all arguments to the contrary. We feel that according to some eternal transcendent system, crimes of gigantic proportions must be punished. Who is the originator of this ultimate standard to which our hearts appeal? It could, granted, be our prehistoric lust for vengeance. But it could also be the inner promptings of the "King who loves both mercy and justice."¹⁹

THE "HOME-BUT-NOT-HOME" PROOF

Frequently associated in recent decades with the name of G. K. Chesterton, the "home-but-not-home" argument is another of the so-called intuitive proofs. It points to the seemingly contradictory feelings which we all have about life in this world. We feel at home, but not quite. We experience certain yearnings, certain longings, which we can never adequately satisfy. We are always looking for the *new* book, the *new* friend, the *new* game, the *new* vacation, the *new* experience — always hoping to satisfy our longings and always just failing to do so. We are comfortable with this life, but at times we live through peak experiences which whisper to us of happiness beyond our own temporal existence. We can't quite pin these feelings down, but they seem to indicate that man exists for some purpose beyond the purely secular.

Now, as I have said many times before, this "proof" doesn't really "prove" anything. Instead, as with all other *inductive* arguments, it points, it guides, it indicates. Just as the traveler heading for the big city begins to see signs telling of its existence as he approaches it and meets people who have been there, similarly the man travelling the path to God will witness many things testifying to the existence of his ultimate destination. They may not guarantee his arrival, but they can surely help him along the road.

THE "MORAL LAW" PROOF

The reader who prefers argumentation of a more empirical nature may be comforted with the thought that this will be the last intuitive argument to be given here for a while. However, we wish to point out that precisely this argument, the moral one, is probably one of the most potent, if not *the* most potent, in the intuitive bag. There have been snatches of this "proof" already presented in the book and there will, without doubt, be more to come. For modern man, caught in the half-way house between religious skepticism and a sense of the moral, it provides an excellent ticket to return to the world of faith. This argument was widely employed by that wise defender of orthodox faith, the late C. S. Lewis, so we shall

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quote him in full as he eloquently sums up the major parts of the "moral law" proof:

All the human beings that history has heard of acknowledge some kind of morality; that is, they feel towards certain proposed actions the experiences expressed by the words "I ought" or "I ought not." These experiences... cannot be logically deduced from the environment and physical experiences of the man who undergoes them. You can shuffle "I want" and "I am forced" and "I shall be well advised" and "I dare not" as long as you please without getting out of them the slightest hint of "ought" and "ought not."... Attempts to resolve the moral experience into something else presuppose the very thing they are trying to explain — as when a famous psychoanalyst deduces it from prehistoric parricide. If the parricide produced a sense of guilt, that was because men felt that they ought not to have committed it; if they did not so feel, it could produce no sense of guilt. Morality... is a jump; in it, man goes beyond anything that can be "given" in the facts of experience. And it has one characteristic too remarkable to be ignored. The moralities accepted among men may differ — though not, at bottom, so widely as is often claimed — but they all agree in prescribing a behavior which their adherents fail to practice. All men alike stand condemned, not by alien codes of ethics, but by their own, and all men therefore are conscious of guilt. [Humanity has a]... consciousness not merely of a moral law, but of a moral law approved and disobeyed. This consciousness is neither a logical, nor an illogical, inference from the facts of experience; if we did not bring it to our experience we could not find it there. It is either inexplicable illusion, or revelation.²⁰

In other words, as Dostoyevski wrote, "If God does not exist, then everything is permitted." For anybody possessed of even a nominally logical mind, the truth of this statement is apparent. There has never been and will never be any *convincing* reason as to why

cheating, stealing, raping, murdering, etc. are to be condemned except by the light of God's revelation.

Now, here, as previously, I grant the reader the prerogative to refuse this argument. There may be readers who actually think that there is no objective standard by which to measure the comparative worth of Adolph Eichmann and Albert Schweitzer. There may, indeed, be an individual somewhere whose sense of reality and of good and evil are so distorted that he is unable to weigh the contributions of Jack the Ripper and Louis Pasteur to mankind on any absolute scale. However, most human beings should, at this stage of the argument, be willing to admit that the "moral law" is a strong indication of a revelatory source of truth, of which it is said, "the laws of God are truth, they are universally just."²¹

THE ONTOLOGICAL PROOF

This proof is simply one of the most fascinating arguments ever offered in favor of God's existence. To some thinkers it is *the* most powerful demonstration of the Creator's reality, to others it is totally nonsensical. Obviously something which can generate such wildly divergent opinions must be fascinating.

The story is told that Bertrand Russell in his youth spent many weeks trying to comprehend the essence of the ontological argument. Finally during an extended stroll in the woods, as he worked and re-worked the argument in his mind, it all of a sudden became clear to him. He threw his cap in the air and joyously shouted, "It's sound... the ontological argument is sound!" As the reader can see, the argument is not a simple proposition.

The ontological proof was first offered by Anselm, the Archbishop of Canterbury, in two forms in his famous work *Proslogion*. In its first appearance it goes briefly like this: God is a being than whom no greater or more perfect being can be conceived; and if we could conceive of a more perfect being than the one originally considered, namely God, then He would no longer be this entity, than whom no greater or more perfect being could be

conceived. This is absurdity. Therefore, God is a perfect being.

In its second form, the argument is: If God exists, He exists in a way that He cannot not exist. If the laws of logic exist, it would be a contradiction to say that it is a contradiction.

Is the ontological argument circular reasoning? For centuries, I have heard but for the sake of argument, I have only put forth my place to begin. *nihil obstat* is any of them. I found in the

THE "TRADITION" We shall now see the all-wise, to the argument of faith and its have by no means ever been addressed. Instead, I have some of the that truly open the alternative.

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*For a more complete includes, see C

conceived. That would of course be a logical contradiction and an absurdity. Therefore, the being than whom no greater or more perfect being can be conceived must be a reality.

In its second form, the argument centers on the very essence of God's perfection. It goes: God is a being than whom no greater or more perfect being can be conceived and he is thought to exist. If the aforementioned being can be thought not to exist then it would be the same as if a greater *can* be thought to exist, which is a contradiction.

Is the ontological argument irrefutable, or is it a case of silly circular reasoning? Philosophers have debated this question for centuries. I personally do not find the argument overwhelming, but for the reader who would like to see the argument persuasively put forth, Charles Hartshorne's *Anselm's Discovery* is a good place to begin.² There are many paths to the Living God and my *nihil obstat* is most assuredly not necessary before setting out on any of them. (Further references on the ontological argument are found in the notes at the end of this chapter.)²³

THE "TRADITION" PROOF

We shall now proceed to leave the area of indicators pointing to the all-wise, benevolent God of religion in general, and journey to the arguments which indicate the specific truths of the Jewish faith and its source, the Torah of God. In the previous pages, I have by no means intended to catalog all the "proofs" which have ever been advanced for the existence of God as we know Him. Instead, I have endeavored to give the reader a short overview of some of the more commonly employed arguments, in the hope that truly open-minded individuals will come to seriously consider the alternative of faith.

The Torah* as we have it today is the *self-same* Torah which God revealed to the Jewish people in the Sinai Desert. *Judaism*

*For a more thorough discussion of exactly what the term *Torah* includes, see Chapter IV.

stands or falls on this point. Either our faith is a Godly system of laws and doctrines, or it is an obscurantist pretension. There is no middle ground. Religious practices may have nostalgic or sentimental value. They may appeal to our sensibilities. They may solidify our feelings of togetherness with other Jews. They may symbolize great truths. All this may be true, but if religious practices are not divinely ordained, then they are no more *ultimately binding* than the utterings of William Blake's fanciful unicorn. I personally love to read or talk about unicorns. Their wisdom is generally far superior to that of our supposedly rational, technological-bureaucratic-scientific elite. However, fantasies, while often providing exalting insights into the deepest nooks and crannies of human existence, must remain just that — fantasies, *untruths*. Religion can never be equated with myth. Religion, orthodox religion as we know it, must relate to empirical reality or be relegated to the status of the legends of Thor, Balder and all the other noble inhabitants of Asgard. One may find great inner perception exhibited in the tales and legends of various cultures, but as all sane men know, in the final analysis, Newton and Bacon were correct: existence does indeed exist, reality is real. As we now proceed to examine the "historical" proofs of the Torah's teachings, let us not lose sight of the fact that life is two-fold. The unicorn romps together with the lion of reality. Any solution to the human predicament must render homage to the King of the Jungle as well as the Lord of the North Wind. Truth must excite our hearts, but it must satisfy our minds and relate to reality as well.

The "traditional" proof of God's existence and of the Torah's historical authenticity was first advanced with clarity by the eleventh-century Spaniard, Rabbi Yehuda ha-Levi, in his classic presentation of the Jewish faith, *The Kuzari*. The work is based on the popular story of the central Asia Minor kingdom of the Khazars and of their conversion to Judaism. The well-known tale relates that the Khazar King was told in a dream that "his way of thinking is pleasing to the Lord but not his way of doing." Upon hearing this message, the monarch decided to discover the one true faith, which

would, indeed, lead him to his court, in Jerusalem, the Holy Land. Finally, after many years of wandering, he summoned the King, presenting him with his entire nation. The King adopted the faith of the "dialogue." The King of Jewish philosophy.

In *The Kuzari*, the story of the revelation at Sinai is considered as the testimony of the glorious events of the history of the Torah is a part of these events. The annals of other religions, the adherents of these religions make similar claims, but nothing more than a prophet or, at most, a supra-temporal revelation without a single person who experienced it. The history of the people and the year history of the "Reformers" of the faith, an unbroken chain from the past to the present.

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would, indeed, "please the Lord." In order to do so, he invited to his court, in succession, a philosopher, a Christian, and a Moham-
medan. Finally, dissatisfied with the answers he received from
them, he summoned a Jew. This Jew spent several days with the
King presenting the "case for Judaism." Ultimately, the King with
his entire nation converted to the "faith of Israel." Rabbi ha-Levi
adopted the format of this famous encounter and supplied the
"dialogue." The work eventually became one of the basic books
of Jewish philosophy.

In *The Kuzari*, faith is justified mainly because the revelation
at Sinai is considered to be a historically verifiable happening. The
testimony of the some two million Jews who witnessed the miracu-
lous events of the Exodus, the splitting of the Sea, and the giving
of the Torah is advanced by ha-Levi as ample evidence of the truth
of these events. There is no similar nation-wide assent, in the
annals of other nations, to a series of supernatural events in which
the adherents themselves were the participants. Other faiths may
make similar claims to miracles and revelations, but they offer
nothing more to support them than the say-so of a supposed
prophet or, at most, a small group of disciples. The other-worldly,
supra-temporal reality of the Jewish revelation was acknowledged,
without a single dissenter, by the complete body of Israelites who
experienced it. These events were vividly engraved on the minds
of the people and were never challenged in the entire four-thousand-
year history of the Torah-nation, until the advent of the German
"Reformers" of the previous century. Torah Jews today represent
an unbroken chain of tradition, stretching from the time of Moses
to the present.

The acceptance of history as a rational discipline, with its
reliance on eye-witnesses, documentary evidence, tradition and the
like is common to all of civilized mankind. All educated human
beings readily believe in the authenticity of a Caesar, a Napoleon
and a Pasteur. Nobody living today has ever actually seen these
men, but the historical factors pointing to the reality of their exist-
ence is overwhelming. Similarly, in the case of the Torah tradition,

we have in our possession all the prerequisites necessary to establish its reliability according to the demands of the science of history. We have written documents carefully safeguarded from that day to the present. We have the unanimous testimony of two million eye-witnesses. We have a continuous link of tradition from that event to our own day.

Actually, it would have been a sign of total obstinacy for any Jew to have doubted the validity of the Sinai event. For some 1,380 years after the giving of the Torah the Jews lived in the land of Israel surrounded by the sites and signs of the many miraculous events in which their forefathers had participated. They were all aware of the exact place where the Red Sea and the Jordan River had been parted by God, and where many of the saintly characters of the Biblical books were buried. In addition, until the destruction of the First Temple, the people were still in the possession of the original text of the Torah in Moses' own handwriting, of the original stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, of a receptacle containing a sample of the heavenly Manna, of the staff of Aaron which had miraculously sprouted almonds, and of the golden vessels which the Philistines had sent when they had returned the Ark after being visited by Divine punishments.

Recent archeological studies of all sorts have served to corroborate many of the details of the Torah.²⁴ Many of the criticisms of the nineteenth century "Bible critics"* have been refuted by scientific discoveries of an archeological and philological nature.²⁵ Space limits their documentation here. The reader is advised to consult the works named in the footnotes as well as those given in the footnotes to Chapter IV (notes 7-11). Empirical evidence of this sort is, of course, not immune to a critique. Various portions of the "traditional" proof could be questioned. However, for the neutral observer who has yet to dogmatize his non-belief into a tightly-shut ideology, the historical indications of the Torah's authenticity seem to be quite potent. For the interested Jew there is much evidence

*See Chapter IV.

*See

to indicate that our Torah is indeed "this Torah which God placed before the children of Israel."²⁶

Furthermore, following the reasoning of the "tradition" proof allows the Jew a certain leeway between the classical proofs, such as the cosmological and teleological, which tend to overemphasize man's reason and its capabilities and the opposite religious extreme of simple faith totally divorced from reality. In other words, by viewing God's revelation as an event of *miraculous yet historical reality* in which the entire Jewish nation were *factual participants*, the Jew is able to step beyond the boundaries of the supposed "faith"-versus-"reason" or "faith"-versus-"materialism" dialectics. The entire nation was witness to the two basic principles of Judaism: (1) God exists; and (2) the Torah is of Divine origin. Thus, according to the postulates of this proof there is no question of either reasoning-from-being-to-God or believing-for-no-reason-whatsoever, but simply of acknowledging the reality of the historical fact of the Sinai breakthrough and of the authority of the tradition which testifies to this fact. Beginning with the basic work of the Oral Torah, the Mishnah,* and continuing through Maimonides and up to the present day, Jewish authorities have documented this unbroken chain of tradition, which stretches from the transcendental revelation experienced by those "who went out of Egypt" throughout the centuries of the "chosen people." This line of direct transmission serves as a guarantee of the truthfulness of our record of the Torah which "Moses received from Sinai."

THE "RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE" PROOF

The famous nineteenth century chasidic rabbi, R. Menachem Mendel of Kotzk, was once told by his followers of a certain rabbi, reputed to be a miracle-worker, who supposedly had visions of God through the gift of the Sacred Spirit. To this the Kotzker replied, "That's fine; it is always nice to see God with the aid of the Sacred Spirit. As for myself, however, I am in a far superior

*See below, Chapter IV.

position, for I see God through faith. It offers a much clearer view than does the Sacred Spirit." For individual Jews who have felt the nearness of God, all arguments in favor of faith are superfluous. To them, attempts to prove the truths of Judaism are totally unnecessary, for they knew of these truths first hand. Few people can boast of having such feelings constantly. Be that as it may, it is my own experience that many Jews have at times sensed the closed proximity of God and the truths of the Torah. This is, of course, small solace to the cold skeptic. However, this datum has been included here for the benefit of any reader who may find it relevant.

THE "SAINTS AND MIRACLES" PROOF

This proof is a tricky one. We do have before us the clear statements of the Torah that once revelation is concluded, God will never again repeal the truths of the Torah via miraculous events. That is to say, nothing in the Torah can be rescinded by some latter-day miracle worker. Maimonides expresses this doctrine as follows:

If a "prophet" shall come forth, performing miracles and wonders, and he shall attempt to deny the prophecy of Moses our teacher, it is forbidden to listen to him and we may rest assured that his miracles are no more than sleight-of-hand or magic...for the prophecy of Moses our teacher is not vindicated by miracles, but [by the fact] that we ourselves saw with our own eyes and heard with our own ears all that he [Moses] saw and heard...²⁶

Therefore, for the Torah Jew, the events at Fatima, for example, are totally irrelevant. However, the fact remains that many prophets and saints have risen throughout Jewish history who wholeheartedly fulfilled the laws of the Torah and did, indeed, prophesize and perform miracles. Supernatural events of this sort have been commonplace during many periods of the Torah nation's existence. At many times testified to by numerous witnesses, these unearthly

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events give proof that God remains forever "the Source of strength and trust for the saintly ones."²⁷

THE EXISTENTIALIST PROOF

Readers familiar with the writings of religious existentialists will find inclusion of their approach in this listing of "proofs" to be somewhat incongruous. Indeed it is, for orthodox existentialism, as personified by the likes of Kierkegaard and Gabriel Marcel, rejects all attempts to prove God's existence. As Kierkegaard writes:

So rather let us mock God out and out; this is always preferable to the disparaging air of importance with which one would prove God's existence. For to prove the existence of one who is present is the most shameless affront, since it is an attempt to make him ridiculous. How could it occur to anybody to prove that he exists unless one had permitted oneself to ignore him and now makes the thing all the worse by proving his existence before his very nose? The existence of a king or his presence is commonly acknowledged by an appropriate expression of subjection and submission; what if, in his presence, one were to prove that he existed? One proves God's existence by worship.²⁸

For the reader of a scientific bent, the preceding paragraph makes little sense. Religious existentialism is not the sort of "system" that appeals to one and all alike. As we have said previously, there are many approaches to God. One doesn't have to be capable of ascending the holy mountain on all of them.

THE "NATURE OF SCRIPTURE" PROOF

Many scholars and thinkers have become convinced of the truthfulness of the Torah through an examination of the Books of the Bible itself. Volumes have been devoted to the demonstration of the amazing degree in which various Biblical prophecies have been fulfilled in the historical affairs of nations and men down through the centuries. Other studies have analyzed the inner continuity, the extraordinary beauty and the profound depth of the

Torah text. Still other students of Near Eastern history point to the fact that the Torah, in direct contrast to the historical records of other Semitic peoples, engages in frequent criticism of the Jewish people, as evidence of its extra-temporal authorship. Of course, none of these arguments are by themselves irrefutable. They are, however, all indicative of the reality of God and His Torah.

Now the time has come to call a halt to all the "proofs" and summarize what we have before us. The "proofs" for God, Torah, and the like are, as the saying goes, a mixed bag. Some are based on empirical science, others on historical fact, still others on inductive reasoning. God in His infinite Wisdom has shaped each and every Jewish soul in a distinct, original manner. It is, therefore, not surprising that He has afforded us so many ways of reaching Him.

Emuna, faith, is a complex process. To some it comes easily, to others it is a life-long struggle. Faith is the end-product of a combination of reason, emotion and intuition and, of course, Divine assistance, all included in varying proportions, depending upon the constitution of the individual Jewish soul. Jewish mysticism teaches that the *nekuda ha-penimith* of each Jewish soul, its Divine innermost point, is constantly longing to acknowledge and serve its Creator. Accordingly, it would seem that for the Jew seriously interested in reclaiming his faith, the path ascending the "mounting of God," while presenting at times some obstacles, can, in the final analysis, be mounted.

The emptiness of the secular age is in evidence everywhere. The time is ripe for a reassessment of the truths of Judaism. The prophet Hosea, in the eighth century before the common era, prophesied of the day in the then distant future when

Ephraim shall say, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

I [God] have told of it and I have foreseen it; I am like a cypress full of sap; from Me your fruit is always at hand.

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He who is wise will grasp this; when he has gained an insight into it, he will understand it: that the ways of God are straight and the righteous shall go forward in them, but transgressors shall stumble on them.²⁹

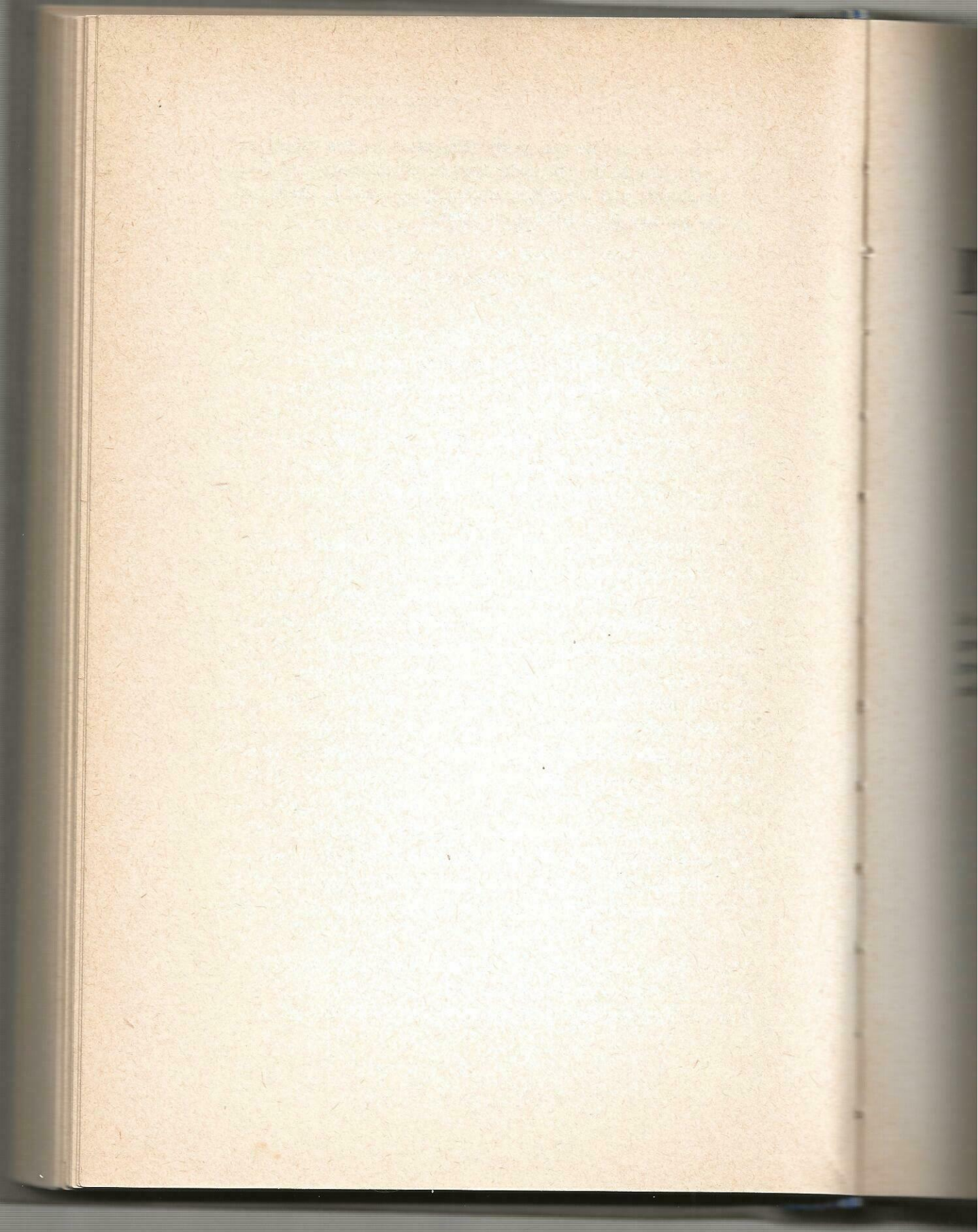
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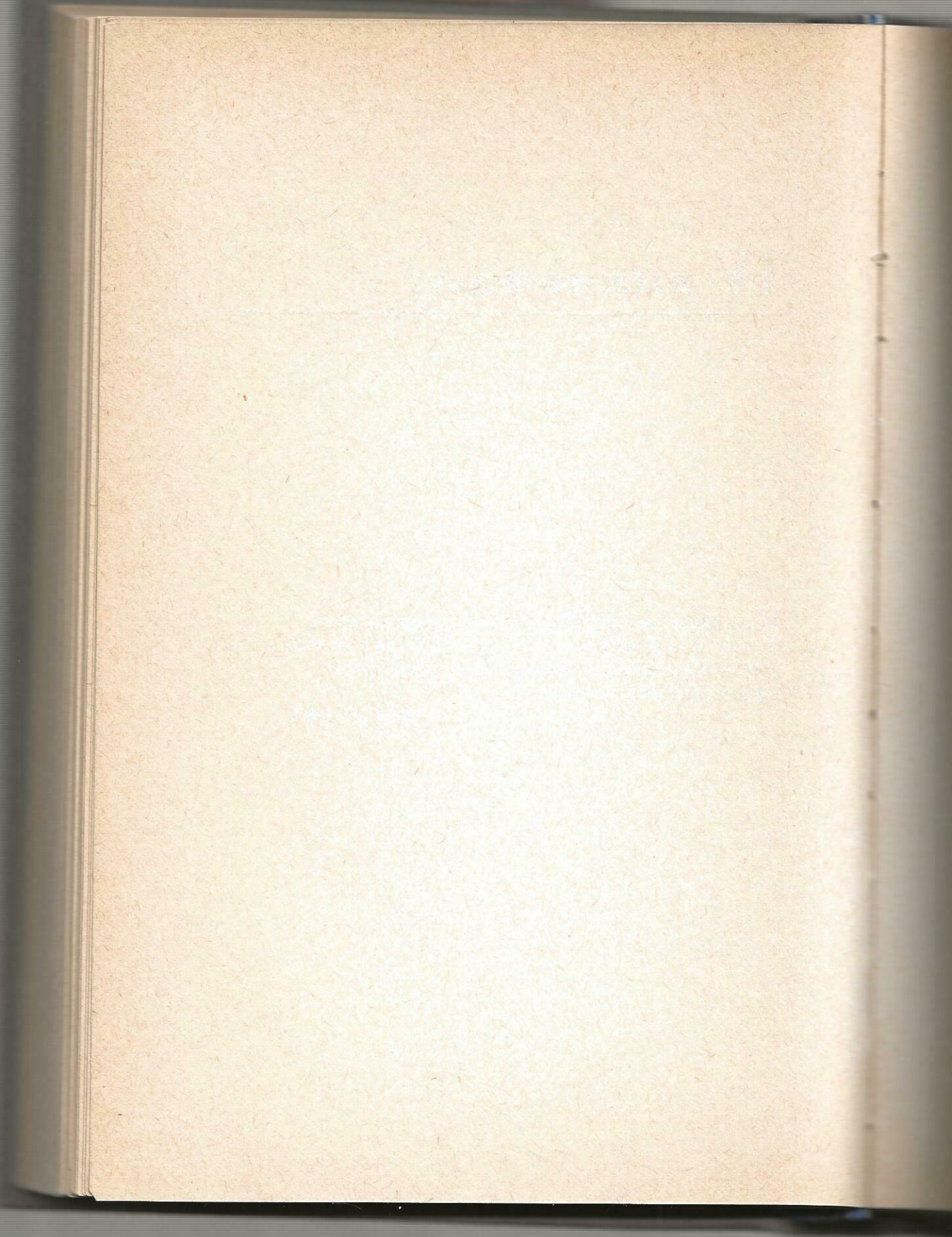
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IV BACK TO WHAT?

In the Psalms we read (18:12), "Truth springs out of the ground." How is the ground to be fertilized, in order for truth to grow? — Once falsehood has been buried, then on that self-same spot truth can grow.

R. YITZCHAK ME'IR OF GER (1799-1866)



There is no way, at this point, that we can avoid fulfilling the wise old dictum of that great Palestinian sage of the early days of the common era, Hillel, when he exhorted one seeking faith to "go and learn." We have been using the words "Torah," "Torah doctrines," "laws" and the like until now, without providing an adequate explanation of their meaning. Thus, let us now turn to the task of supplying some long-overdue definitions.

To begin with, this Torah of which we have spoken has, for all practical purposes, two completely different connotations when used by those who follow its strictures, the Jews. In the first place, as strict usage would have it, the term Torah refers to the first five books of the Bible. These opening books of the Scriptures, alternatively known as the five books of Moses, are, of course, fairly well known. Their names, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are, compared to other portions of the Jewish sacred literature, pretty much common knowledge. So much for the first meaning of the word Torah. The second definition is the one that is being followed in this book. Its usage is more limited, confined basically to that remnant of Jews who believe in and practice their faith. To them, Torah consists of *all* the Biblical books of the *Jewish*, "Old Testament" canon, and all the authoritative works of the Jewish "oral" tradition, which are for the most part presently in writing. This huge and, as we shall see, at times hard to delineate mass of writings is what believing Jews call the Torah.

Now this somewhat vague definition is full of unanswered questions. The first obviously must be, "Who said so?" That is, by whose definition is the term Torah being explained? Secondly, what is the need for an oral tradition? Why couldn't it have been written down when first promulgated? Thirdly, aren't oral traditions by their very nature (as all participants in the children's birthday-party pastime, "telephone," can readily testify) extremely prone to fallibility? Which brings to mind a fourth query, namely, to what degree is all this immense amount of sacred literature actually "sacred"? Is it all God's word? Is it holy or infallible or anything similar? Fifthly, by whose criteria does a given Jew enter the privileged ranks of those conveyors of the tradition designated as "authoritative?" Sixthly, if the lines of demarcation between works deemed authoritative and those failing to meet the grade is as vague as hinted in the above introduction, then aren't many of the supposedly "authoritative" doctrines and laws actually subject to dispute?

(Here, as throughout the book, I have attempted to be a sincere "devil's advocate." Hopefully, the six points raised in the previous paragraph are representative of some of the qualms which may have existed in the reader's mind. Without a doubt, though, many readers will remain unsatisfied. It would be a virtual impossibility, however, to write a book about Judaism that would answer any and all questions concerning its beliefs. I will, therefore, simply ask that the reader who finds my articulation of the devil's cause to be insufficient to pay attention to the gist of the following pages, nonetheless. It may not be exactly what the proverbial doctor, himself, would have ordered, but hopefully the forthcoming will shed some light on the problems involved.)

Before proceeding to answer the above questions, it becomes necessary to put some meat on the bones of our somewhat skimpy definition of the Torah. The written Torah (as opposed to the oral Torah, which we shall deal with later on), known in Hebrew as the *torah shebichethav*, includes the twenty-four books of the Jewish Bible. It is further sub-divided into the five books of Moses,

constituting the Torah proper, the books of the prophets, known as *nevi'im* in Hebrew, and those writings known as *kethuvim* in the sacred tongue. Jews believe the first five books of the Torah to be of direct Divine origin and they further accept our present text of those books to be, for all practical purposes, non-violate. The other books, the Prophets and the Writings, are also considered to be derived from God — not, however, in the same lucid manner with which Moses received the first books, but through a lesser medium, known as prophecy in the case of the former and “sacred spirit” in the case of the latter. We have already listed the books of the Torah proper. A more detailed description of these books and other Biblical books follows:

TORAH

(1) *Genesis*: It contains the account of creation, the lives of early men, Adam, Cain, Abel, Noah, etc.; the history of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the immigration of Jacob's family to Egypt; the death of Jacob and his blessing to his children; the death of Joseph.

The Book of Genesis is, obviously, extremely important, as it sets the metaphysical background for the entire Torah and, indeed, for all of human existence. Two themes dominate its narratives: first, that God is the Creator of all existence; and secondly, that man's pursuit of the righteous life is the primary purpose of creation. Accordingly, in the Book of Genesis history is not presented by God as a dry “value-free” description of haphazardly related events, but as the constant struggle of man to live up to the demands of the good life. Instead of concentrating on merely political or social upheavals, the emphasis is placed upon either man's failure to submit himself to God's laws, as in the case of Adam, the Tower of Babel, the flood, Esau, etc., or upon man's fulfillment of those laws in spite of difficulty, as in the case of Noah, the patriarchs, Joseph, etc. Finally, the “choice” by God of “Abraham and his seed after him” to play an altogether unique role in world history is also clearly related in this Book.

(2) *Exodus*: It tells the history of the enslavement of the Jews in Egypt; their redemption from there through miraculous events; the reception of the Torah at Sinai; and some of the journeys of the Jews in the wilderness area between Egypt and the land of Israel.

In addition, in marked contrast to the Book of Genesis, where God reveals few of His precepts to man, the Book of Exodus features a vast array of Divine legislation including such well-known laws as those governing Passover, the Sabbath and the festivals, among many others. The world-famous Ten Commandments are also to be found in this book.

Revelation at Sinai, as we have pointed out previously, is the key doctrine of Judaism. It is here, in the Book of Exodus, that this awesome historic event is related in full detail. Thus, the nineteenth chapter of this Book is clearly the crucial point of the entire Torah. As Maimonides writes in the *Mishneh Torah*:

Israel did not believe in Moses because of the signs which he performed; for belief based on signs leaves some suspicion of magic or trickery. . . . They believed in him at Sinai only because they observed with their own eyes and heard with their own ears the thunder and lightning. . . . We (the Jewish people) actually heard the Divine Voice . . . as it is written in the Torah, "Face to face, God spoke to you." The gathering at Sinai was the basis for the belief that his (Moses') prophecy was beyond any distrust, as it is written (Exodus 19:9), "I shall come to you in a thick cloud so that the people shall hear when I speak to you and also in you shall they believe forever."¹

(3) *Leviticus*: This Book is almost totally given over to the laws of the faith, with a few short historical interjections. The laws established in Leviticus include those governing the sacrificial system, forbidden foods, ritual uncleanness, marriage, the jubilee and others.

(4) *Numbers*: This Book relates the further travels of the Jews on the way to Israel, detailing the incidents which highlighted

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the period, e.g., Miriam's punishment, the rebellion of the spies, Korach's rebellion, the death of Aaron, the Balak affair and many others. Also included herein are many new laws, among them the regulations for a *nazir*, the laws of *tzitzith* and the laws governing vows.

(5) *Deuteronomy*: This consists mostly of various speeches given by Moses shortly before the entry of the Jews into the Holy Land. The Book of Deuteronomy also reviews many of the important Jewish laws ordained by God in the other parts of the Torah. In addition, in this Book the people as a whole are firmly exhorted by Moses to persevere in their loyalty to God and His Torah through any difficulties which future periods may bring. Moses' passing on the eve of the entry into Canaan concludes this last of the "Five Books of the Torah."

PROPHETS — NEVI'IM

(1) *Joshua*: The story of the Jewish entry, conquest and ultimate division of the land of Israel is told here.

(2) *Judges*: It relates the history of the Jews during the semi-anarchic pre-monarchy period.

(3) *Samuel*, 2 Books: They relate the details of the life of the prophet Samuel and the eventual establishment of the Jewish monarchy under his auspices, until the end of King David's reign.

(4) *Kings*, 2 Books: They contain the history of the Jews from the death of David to the time of the destruction of the First Temple.

(5) *Isaiah*: This book contains prophecies by the prophet of the same name, who lived in the Kingdom of Judah when it was flourishing. It contains both long- and short-range prophecies relating to the entire history of the Jewish people.

(6) *Jeremiah*: This is a record of the prophecies of Jeremiah, who lived in the Kingdom of Judah during its final days, and both foresaw and lived through the destruction of the First Temple.

(7) *Ezekiel*: The words of the Divine messages received by the prophet of the same name during the Babylonian captivity.

(8) *The Twelve Minor Prophets*: All these prophets lived during the days of the First Temple, with the exception of the last three, who prophesied during the period of Babylonian captivity and the subsequent return of the Jews to their land. Their names were Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah and Malachi.

WRITINGS — KETHUVIM

- (1) *Psalms*: hymns of a devotional nature.
- (2) *Proverbs*: aphorisms in praise of the God-fearing life.
- (3) *Job*: the trials and tribulations of the righteous man, Job, struggling to keep his faith in spite of adverse circumstances.
- (4) *Song of Songs*: The faithfulness of the love between God and the Jewish people is poetically rendered in a notably allegorical style.
- (5) *Lamentations*: dirges (poetry of sorrow and lament) mourning the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem.
- (6) *Ecclesiastes*: reflections on the senselessness of life when devoid of God's Revelation.
- (7) *Esther*: the popular story of the thwarted plans of the evil Haman to destroy the Jews of Persia.
- (8) *Daniel*: historical and prophetic narratives centering on the life of the righteous Daniel during the Babylonian captivity.
- (9) *Ezra*: the story of the Jewish return to Israel and the rebuilding of the Temple after the Babylonian exile.
- (10) *Nehemiah*: the rebuilding of the Jewish community in the early days of the return from Babylonia.
- (11) *Chronicles*, 2 Books: a recapitulation of various events in pre-exilic Jewish history.

Having gone through this altogether too brief outline of the written Torah, we can move on to some of the questions raised above, and some others newly arisen. It is the Jewish belief that the entire Torah which we have in our possession today is the self-same

Torah dictated to Moses by God. The exact nature of that dictation is, of course, unknown and unknowable to purely temporal beings, but of this much the Jewish people are certain: that Moses faithfully wrote down the words of God which were directly and clearly communicated to him. On the basis of this doctrine, Jews have always regarded the entire five books of the Bible to be equally holy products of God's infinite wisdom, as Maimonides writes:

Truly, in every letter of the Torah there abide wise maxims and admirable truth for him to whom God has given understanding. You cannot grasp the uttermost bounds of its wisdom. It is larger in measure than the earth, and wider than the sea.²

Jews adhere to this belief in the Divine revelation of the Torah on the basis of tradition, faith and an empirical appraisal of the facts. The powerful argument from tradition generally associated with the famous work, *The Kuzari*, has been presented above. Faith is ultimately available to any Jewish soul which longs for it in truth, leaving us only to examine the empirical facts of the matter as they stand at present.

The area of Biblical scholarship is a vastly confusing one. No longer do the glib dogmas of the nineteenth-century Bible critics command the respect of the scholarly community. The polemical approach of that "father" of Higher Criticism, Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918), which postulated factual occurrences in ancient history on the basis of prior ideological conclusions of an evolutionary utopianism, is seen today as a sadly prejudiced caricature of true Biblical research. As Rabbi J. H. Hertz writes of the heady self-confidence of those early devotees of Wellhausen:

Little did they dream...that...in the field of Bible study [new discoveries would eventually be made] which would shatter the foundations of the Wellhausen hypothesis, and definitely declare its assumptions to be both unscientific and obsolete.³

Without entering into the scholarly subtleties involved, let it be briefly stated that the Higher Criticism, with its supposed plethora of Biblical authors and documents, has come under fire of the most painstakingly documentary nature. We have already mentioned the works (available in English) of Umberto Cassuto⁴ and Yechezkel Kaufmann,⁵ which totally devastate the Higher Critical theory. Although Cassuto's work comes closer to the authentic Jewish doctrine than Kaufmann's, both scholars completely reject the conclusions as well as the methodology of the Critical theory. However, let it be said that neither of the two accept the Torah view of total Mosaic authorship. Their major accomplishment is that by demonstrating the erroneous presuppositions of the Critical theory they have opened up this field for a host of other researchers who do indeed accept Mosaic authorship, i.e., its Divine origin. The fine efforts of Rabbi Max Kapustin,⁶ Rabbi Emanuel Feldman,⁷ Rabbi Louis Rabinowitz,⁸ and Steven Shaw⁹ must rank as superb introductions to a Torah approach to this field. Elihu A. Schatz has also produced a fine volume which offers, from a Torah view, *Proof of the Accuracy of the Bible*.¹⁰ Unfortunately one of the classic works in this area remains that of a nineteenth-century German Rabbi, David Hoffman, which is as yet not translated into English. He produced commentaries on the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy devoted to totally refuting the Wellhausen school.¹¹

Bible criticism grew up in an era when various segments of Europe's scholarly community reached conclusions first and supplied the proof later. The results and fallacies of the Hegelian evolutionary immanentism which gave birth to the Critical theory have been treated by many scholars.¹² For our present purposes, it is sufficient to state that as far as a non-biased, scientific view is concerned there is ample evidence to support the truth of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. When combined with the Kuzari's "tradition" arguments and the illuminating insights of faith, it is more than sufficient. As Rabbi Hertz once summed up the matter:

And we, the descendants of those who stood at the foot of Sinai, will continue to bless Him who is the God of truth,

whose Law is a Law of truth, whose prophets are prophets of truth, and who aboundeth in deeds of goodness and truth. We will continue to lift the *Sefer Torah* on high and exclaim: "This is the Law which Moses set before the children of Israel at the command of the Lord." We will continue to sing, "A true Torah God gave His people, by the hand of Moses, his faithful servant."¹³

As for the Prophets and later Biblical books, we must leave the question of their authenticity for the moment, as we briefly present the basic features of the Oral Torah, for it is the Oral Torah which actually canonized the Prophets and Writings. The first and basic work of the Oral Torah is the Mishna. Originally handed down by word-of-mouth, hence the term "Oral," it was finally committed to writing by Rabbi Yehuda, known as the "Prince," and his disciples, in the second century of the common era. It consisted of laws handed down by the Rabbinical authorities of each generation. Although the bulk of Mishnaic laws have their source in Sinaitic antiquity, the authorities cited are those of two groups, the Men of the Great Assembly and the *Tanna'im*, teachers, whose activities spanned a period of several hundred years before and after the dawn of the common era. The Mishna is divided into six orders, which are further subdivided into 63 tractates. The orders, briefly described, are:

- (1) *Zera'im* (Seeds), which deals mainly with agricultural laws relating to the land, its development and produce.
- (2) *Mo'ed* (Festival), which contains the laws governing the Sabbath, holidays and fast days.
- (3) *Nashim* (Women), which treats all aspects of marriage, divorce and other related topics.
- (4) *Nezikin* (Damages), which consists of civil and criminal laws and governmental matters.
- (5) *Kodashim* (Holy Things), which deals with the Temple and the sacrificial system.
- (6) *Taharoth* (Purities), which treats of the ritual states of purity and defilement.

Rabbi David Hoffman, when speaking of the origins of the Mishna, writes:

The biblical word read from the written book and the teachings heard from the mouths of the Sages are for the Israelite the two sources from which he draws the Torah received by Moses from God on Sinai. The Torah is one, although the source from which it issues is twofold, the teaching which comes to us from the Mishna of the Sages is of the identical date and identical origin as that which is derived by interpretation of the scriptural word, all is given by one God and communicated by one and the same prophet. Hence, when we speak of written law and oral law, we have in mind one and the same law of God derived in part from the Divine word committed to writing and in part from the authoritative statements of the teachers of tradition.¹⁴

The fact that most laws of the Mishna date back to ancient times is amply documented by that massive work of Torah scholarship, *Doroth ha-Rishonim*, by Rabbi Yitzchak Izak haLevi, who lived in Germany at the turn of the century.¹⁵ However, the bulk of haLevi's major conclusions and many of his arguments can be found in the classic work, *Torah Nation*, by Rabbi Avigdor Miller.¹⁶

There are, however, some Mishnaic laws which the sages themselves instituted. The legitimacy of these laws rests upon those verses in Deuteronomy which are so basic to the entire concept of the Oral Torah and the authoritative nature of the dicta of the duly constituted Rabbinical leaders of each generation. Quoted in its entirety the passage reads:

If there should arise a matter too hard for you in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, even matters of controversy within your gates; then you shall arise, and go up to the place which the Lord your God shall choose. And you shall come to the priests and the Levites, and to the judge who will be in those days; and you shall inquire; and they will declare to you the sentence of judgment. And you shall do according to the

tenor of the sentence which they will declare to you, from that place which the Lord shall choose; and you shall observe to do according to all that they will teach you. According to the law which they will teach you, and according to the judgment which they will tell you, you shall do; you shall not turn aside from the matter which they will tell you, to the right hand or to the left. And the man who acts presumptuously, by not listening to the *kohen* who stands to minister there, before the Lord, your God, or to the judge, that man shall die, and you shall exterminate the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear, and no longer act presumptuously.¹⁷

The doctrine is clearly spelled out. Final authority in religious matters is delegated to the duly constituted leaders of the people, be they priests, Levites or simply Rabbis. The need for a final repository on religious matters is explained in an anonymous commentary on the Biblical commandments entitled *Sefer ha-Chinuch*. Its author writes:

Among the reasons for this commandment [of not turning aside from the words of the Sages] is that since the opinions of human beings are so diverse and many of people's opinions on matters can in no way be reconciled; and [since] the Lord of all knew that if the interpretation of the Torah were to become a matter left to each individual's understanding, then everyone would go about interpreting the Torah according to his own insights and disagreements would arise in Israel concerning the commandments [their procedure and] meaning, resulting in the one Torah becoming many different Torahs — for this reason our God, who is the Lord of all wisdoms, perfected our Torah, the Torah of truth, with this commandment, in which we are commanded to conduct ourselves according to the true commentary which was received by tradition from our earliest sages, of blessed memory. And [similarly], in each and every generation we must hearken to the sages of the time, that we should accept their words... Our tradition tells us that the biblical words, "you

shall not turn aside from the matter which they will tell you, to the right or to the left," means even if the sages should tell us that right is left and left is right, we should not swerve from their words; that is, even if they should be mistaken in one ruling of their rulings, it is not proper for us to disobey them, but we should act in accordance with their error, [for] it is better to tolerate one mistake but have all our general affairs subject to their good judgment constantly than to have each individual establish his own rituals according to his own insights, for through this [the individualistic approach] shall result the [eventual] destruction of the faith, the total fragmentation of the people and the ultimate obliteration of the nation.¹⁸

The wisdom of the Creator in establishing the Torah sages of the nation as the authoritative bearers of the tradition has been borne out throughout Jewish history. Occasionally there have arisen small but fanatical groups which have denied the validity of the Rabbinic tradition and have called for a return to "pure," Bible Judaism. Among them were the Karaites of eighth- and ninth-century Babylonia and the more moderate of the early German "Reformers" of the nineteenth century. Both of these heretical movements eventually dissolved into fragmented religious nihilism as their leaders learned that subjective portrayals of truth usually become unhinged as time goes by. In the case of the Karaites, after some two centuries of bickering among themselves as to what was the exact nature of their "purified" Judaism, they were finally totally torn apart by the infighting of literally dozens of rival factions. Some of these groups still exist today, dismally living out their crippled existence, numbering not more than a few thousand individuals in Israel and Turkey. "Reform" Judaism is another sorrowful example of a heretical sect which offers as many different versions of truth as it has ideologues. Despite its supposedly large membership in America, in reality the overwhelming majority of its followers are completely apathetic to the confused hodge-podge of doctrines and rituals which it offers. Its ranks are constantly being diminished

by the twin forces of assimilation and intermarriage. All of which is a sorry commentary indeed on the status of an ideology which viewed its mission at one time as a return to the "pure" truth of the Bible. Clearly, a faith, if it is to survive in any viable and coherent manner, must have a religious elite to decide disputed matters and to legislate authoritatively—as the author of *Sefer haChinuch* pointed out in the thirteenth century.

The method whereby the Torah leaders of every generation are to render their decisions is clearly spelled out in the tradition itself. It is no haphazard process which God has empowered with the ultimate right to examine and elucidate the meaning of His revelation. As Rabbi Miller writes:¹⁹

The sages are required to do their duty of ascertaining the truth *to the best of their ability according to the procedures specified by the Torah*, including deliberation, investigation, argument, learning from a master and with companions, knowing the subject matter, following the majority, and other conditions of procedure. The decisions *then become Torah*.*

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, vigorous opponent of the "Reformist" heresy, explains the seriousness of the issue involved:

Be just as particular in carrying out what the legal authorities of Israel, whom God has appointed as representatives of the law as supervisors of its observance, ordained according to their Divinely assigned duty in life. They knew life deeply, and nobly and grandly did they carry out their lofty task.

Whoever on the strength of his own preference or his own judgment rejects the authority of our Sages, and with it all that comes under the heading of the Oral Law, excludes himself therewith from the brotherhood of Israel.²⁰

"Exclusion from the brotherhood of Israel." These are powerful words, but, when we scrutinize them, totally understandable. For there can be no "brotherhood of Israel," no Jewish nation, no

*Rabbi Miller's italics. His reference to "becoming Torah" means, in the terms of the present volume, becoming Oral Torah.

lasting faith, if the laws of Deuteronomy concerning obedience to the Torah leaders are not to be followed. This has been one of the major errors of the various modern heretical Jewish sects. By rejecting the clear words of God in the Torah which established the system of Torah legislation, these groups have not only defied the word of the Creator, but by so doing have implanted the seeds of their own destruction in their midst. As the non-biased *Encyclopaedia Judaica* describes the anarchistic situation of the largest of these heretical groups:²¹

Pulled simultaneously in [many] opposite directions, Reform Judaism thus faces the problem which has remained without solution from the movement's beginning: the question of religious authority with the resulting difficulty of setting limits. ...It seems that any solution to the problem of authority will be on the local level.*

Of course, any Jewish authority which is merely local would be more in the nature of sectarianism than true authority. In reality the problem remains insoluble to all who reject the Godly stipulations of Deuteronomy, Chapter 17.

Upon the conclusion of the Mishna, the population center of the Jewish people shifted to the land of Babylonia, and its spiritual center was specifically located in the Torah academies of Sura and Pumbeditha. It was there, and in other Torah schools throughout this new homeland, that Jewish scholars began to pore over the laws of the Mishna, explaining, interpreting and, at times, deciding between the authorities cited therein. The texts of these deliberations, which involved hundreds of Babylonian and Palestinian Torah giants, and spanned three centuries from approximately 200 CE to 500 CE, were finally organized and committed to writing

*The reader is invited at this point to re-read the words of the *Sefer haChinuch* on page 159, and compare the amazing accuracy of his predictions to the historical realities.

by a special editorial body of Rabbinical authorities headed by the sages Ravina and Rav Ashi. This massive work, which fills nineteen huge folio volumes, is known as the Babylonian Talmud, and its Torah authorities are referred to as *Amora'im*. The Talmud, or *Gemara* as it sometimes referred to, contains much more than a simple codification and clarification of Jewish law. It discusses many areas of interest to the Jew, including philosophy, ethics, morals and history, and even touches on medicine, zoology and other seemingly secular disciplines. For the serious Torah student it is pretty much *the* study to be pursued. Legitimate, Divinely ordained Torah Judaism is, and remains, the Judaism codified in the Talmud.

The development of the Oral Torah did not stop with the final rendition of the Talmud. In each and every ensuing generation, the duly constituted Torah authorities have continued to examine and probe the depths of the Written and Oral laws. This process is never-ending and continues to our own day. Whenever or wherever legitimate Torah sages are to be found, they are inevitably engaged in this ongoing interpretation of the Divine revelation. The binding character of their various opinions depends upon the degree to which their views are accepted according to the procedures outlined in the Torah itself. Factors such as majority vote, level of erudition and the like all play a part. Of course, a tradition of this sort is not always as precise as some would like. Disagreements do arise at times. However, the main point to be remembered is that as long as one remains within the boundaries of the Written and Oral Torahs, submitting oneself to their authority, then one remains a loyal adherent of God's faith. The senseless argument of the "Reformers" that, since authentic Judaism does indeed sanction differing opinions, therefore their ideologies should also be considered legitimate is, accordingly, preposterous nonsense. By rejecting the authoritative nature of the Oral Torah and its binding legislative process at the time of the movement's inception, and by subsequently denying the validity of the Bible itself, the "Reformers" did not represent a "dissenting opinion" within the

framework of Torah Judaism but a total denial of the basic beliefs of that faith.

Briefly, then, let us now examine the growth of the authentic Torah tradition from the conclusion of the Talmud to the present. After the Talmud was finished, several generations of scholars in Babylonia continued to re-edit its contents and briefly explain its texts. They were known as the *Rabbanan Sabora'im** and their work was conducted under the most adverse of conditions as the anti-Semitic persecutions of the murderous Magi sect swept Babylonia at that time. However, by the year 609 the time of troubles had passed, and the Torah community began to flourish openly once again. The scholarly leaders of the Jews during this period were called Gaonim.** Torah excellence reached great heights during the Gaonic period, which extended from the earlier part of the seventh century to the end of the tenth. At that time, the center of Torah learning passed from the land of the Tigris and Euphrates and it was in Spain that it re-rooted itself.

The Golden Age of Spanish Jewry, a period of remarkable Torah activity, extended from the early tenth century to the expulsion of the Jews in the year 1492. At that time the center of Torah life shifted to Central and ultimately Eastern Europe. In the Medieval Era, Judaism flourished in the face of a hostile Christian community until the outbreak of the various heretical movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which spread their evil doctrines among European Jews and resulted in the eventual apathetic stance of the twentieth-century Jew, who remains numbly oblivious of the fact that he has abandoned the world of the Mishna and Talmud for that of dogmatic secularism.

An important event in the Torah history of the Jewish people took place in mid-sixteenth-century Israel, where the sainted sage Rabbi Joseph Karo of Safed, acknowledged to have been the Torah leader of his people during that time, composed his classic work,

*Meaning, literally, Rabbis who explained.

**Meaning Sages, or great Talmudic scholars and leaders.

the *Shulchan Aruch*, the *Code of Jewish Law*. Based upon two earlier works of this sort, one by the famed Rabbi Moses Maimonides and the other by the lesser known Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, this famous *Code* of Rabbi Karo's presented in an organized manner all the laws of the Jewish faith applicable to life in the exile era. The work immediately became world-famous and was reissued eight times between 1569 and 1600 alone. It became the universally accepted sourcebook of Jewish law and has remained so to our day. Fortunately for the English reader, it is available in English in an abridged but authoritative format, of which more will be said in Chapter Five.

This, then, is the general picture of the Oral Torah of the Jewish people. It is time now to return to the question above as to the authenticity of the latter books of the Bible. The traditions concerning the authorship and Divine inspiration of the latter canonized Biblical books was common knowledge among the Jews of antiquity. These traditions were handed down from generation to generation, just as the vast majority of Mishnaic laws themselves were. At the time of the systematic condification of the Mishna, the sages of that period, the Men of the Great Assembly, officially proclaimed what had always been common knowledge, that the prophetic books were of Divine origin and were to be canonized. Their decisions on this matter, as on other matters, were completely authoritative, based as they were on the powers delegated them by God in Deuteronomy 17: 21.

Now, to the questions raised at the beginning of the chapter (see page 150) we can succinctly reply:

(1) The term Torah, when used to define the entire body of Torah literature, is employed in accordance with the standard set up by God Himself in Deuteronomy 17, where He authorized the Oral Torah.

(2) The need for a dual Torah combined of both Written and Oral parts was, indeed, willed by the Creator. That was the way He chose to reveal His Will to the Jewish people. The reasons for this decision on His part can only be conjectured about. Some

Torah authorities do have very convincing theories on the matter. They are, however, not germane to the question of the Oral Torah's legitimacy and binding character.

(3, 4) The possibility of the existence of errors in the Oral Law is a matter about which Torah Jews seem to disagree. However, whether it be inherently error-free or not, the documents of the Oral Torah are considered *authoritative* and *binding* by all traditional Jews.²²

(5) The criteria by which a Jew may engage in authoritative interpretation are established by the traditions handed down from Sinai.²³

(6) Yes, indeed, many laws are subject to dispute. The key point of Torah Judaism is not that all Jews should behave in a one-hundred-percent uniform manner, but that they should follow the authoritative strictures of the duly constituted Torah sages of their own and previous eras.

At this point, our short outline of the content of the Divinely revealed Torah has come to an end. For the interested Jew who wishes to pursue the matter further, basically all the major repositories of both the Written and Oral Torah are available in reliable English translation. The five books of Moses with the traditional commentary of that French Torah giant, Rabbi Shelomoh Yitzchaki (1040-1105), usually abbreviated as Rashi, can be had in a Hebrew-English edition from Philipp Feldheim Inc. in New York.²⁴ Rashi's commentary, however, is at times a bit intricate for the novice and the excellent work entitled *The Soncino Chumash*, under the editorship of the Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, which presents a digest of the commentaries of Rashi as well as six other medieval authorities, would perhaps be a better place to start.²⁵ In addition, the well known biblical translation and commentary of Rabbi Dr. J. H. Hertz is specially geared to the interests and problems of the modern reader.²⁶

As for the other biblical books, the only complete source in English with Jewish-oriented commentary is the set of *Soncino*

*Books of the Bible.*²⁷ Each volume in this set is generally devoted to one of the prophetic works. In addition, in recent years a new series of truly excellent Hebrew-English renditions of the Biblical books has begun to see the light of day. These volumes combine traditional scholarship with a wealth of background and popular information skillfully suited to both expert and novice. They are available from ArtScroll Studios Ltd. in New York.²⁸

The Mishna, translated and explained with introductions, notes and a vocalized Hebrew text, all-in-all a superb work, by Philip Blackman F.C.S., can be had from the Judaica Press in New York.²⁹ As for the Talmud, a multi-volumed English translation is available from the Soncino Press.³⁰ Various other volumes of Torah works, such as the *Midrash* and *Zohar*, are available from different publishers, too numerous for all to be listed.

Bible, Mishna, Talmud and Midrash are the sourcebooks of the Jewish faith. Their study is one of the prime religious obligations devolving upon the Jews. To spend fruitful hours immersed in the study of these and similar authoritative texts of Judaism has always been the supreme accomplishment of Jewish life. As Jews everywhere recite daily in their prayers:

With love everlasting have You loved the House of Israel, Your people; the Torah and commandments, statutes and ordinances You have taught us. Therefore, O God our God, when we lie down and when we rise up, we will meditate upon Your statutes and rejoice in the words of Your Torah and in Your commandments forever, for they are our life and the length of our days and upon them we will meditate day and night. May You never remove Your love from us. Blessed be You, God, Who loves Your people of Israel.³¹

The study of the Torah, besides being the lifeblood of our people, is also a fulfillment of several biblical commandments. For example, in Deuteronomy God bids the Jewish people:

And these words, which I command you this day, shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently unto

your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise up.³²

Basically, then, the question of "Back to what?" is answered by: back to Torah, to knowledge and understanding of its component works. However, the Torah represents more than just a legal system: it also contains the fundamental doctrines of the Jewish faith. Contrary to the crazy-quilt distortions of the "Reformers," Judaism does, indeed, possess first principles. It presents, throughout the various source books of its faith, a collection of clearly spelled out beliefs which all Torah authorities have considered to be basic. Different Torah sages have at times attempted to codify these doctrines. The names of Rabbi Joseph Albo and Rabbi Chasdai Crescas, among others, are generally associated with these attempts. By far, however, the most widely accepted of all these codifications of fundamentals is that of Rabbi Moses Maimonides. Widely known even in the non-Jewish world for his great works in the area of religious philosophy, Maimonides was also one of the greatest Talmudists and encyclopedists of Jewish law in the history of his people. Born in the year 1135 in Cordoba, Spain, Rambam (as he is called, by the initials of his name) was widely known for both his unparalleled Torah scholarship and his secular erudition. After leaving Spain as a boy, he eventually settled in Egypt, where his activities included the role of chief physician to the grand vizier, leader of the Jewish community, general medical practitioner, and prolific writer on a vast array of topics, both of a rabbinical and scientific nature. Before his death in 1204, he had also composed a short listing of what he considered to be the thirteen basic principles of the Jewish faith. Later these doctrines were incorporated as the "Thirteen Declarations of Jewish Faith," a voluntary addition to the morning services. In their prayerbook form they read:

(1) I wholly believe that the Creator, may His name be blessed, is the creator and ruler of all created things, and that He alone has made, does make, and ever will make all things.

(2) I wholly believe that the Creator, may His name be blessed, is one and that there is no oneness in any form like His, and that He alone was, is, and ever will be our God.

(3) I wholly believe that the Creator, may His name be blessed, is not a physical body, and that no bodily attributes apply to Him and that there is nothing in existence in any way comparable to Him.

(4) I wholly believe that the Creator, may His name be blessed, was the first and will be the last.

(5) I wholly believe that the Creator, may His name be blessed, is the only being to whom it is proper to offer prayer, and that we must not pray to anyone else.

(6) I wholly believe that the words of the Prophets are true.

(7) I wholly believe that the prophecy of Moses, our teacher, may he rest in peace, was true, and that he was the father of all Prophets, both of those who preceded and of those who followed him.

(8) I wholly believe that the whole Torah which we now possess is the same which was given to Moses our teacher, may he rest in peace.

(9) I wholly believe that this Torah will not be changed and that there will be no other Torah given by the Creator, may His name be blessed.

(10) I wholly believe that the Creator, may His name be blessed, knows all the actions and thoughts of human beings, as it is written, "It is he who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their deeds."³³

(11) I wholly believe that the Creator, may His name be blessed, rewards those who observe His commandments, and punishes those who transgress His commandments.

(12) I wholly believe in the coming of the Messiah and, although he may tarry, I daily await his coming.

(13) I wholly believe that there will be a revival of the dead at a time which will please the Creator, may His name be blessed and exalted for all eternity.

In his *Mishneh Torah*, or legal code, Rambam further expanded on the exact nature of the Messianic era:

The King Messiah will in some future time appear and restore the Kingdom of David to its former power, build the Temple, bring together the scattered of Israel and all the ancient laws will again be in force: sacrifices will be offered and years of release and Jubilees will be kept as prescribed in the Law. Whoever does not believe in him (the Messiah), or hope for his coming, shows a want of faith not only in the Prophets, but also in the Law; for the Law testifies concerning him in the words, "And the Lord your God will again bring you back from your captivity, show mercy to you, and again gather you, etc."; "If your outcasts be at the end of the heavens, from there will the Lord gather you, etc." and "the Lord will bring you, etc."³⁴

Belief in a millennium era, when God will finally bring down the curtain of history as we know it, has been considered basic by the Jewish people from the earliest days of antiquity. Contrary to the teachings of the early Gnostics and their modern successors, the secular utopians of various ideologies, Jews have never believed that humanity can reach this age of perfection on its own, but only through a series of miraculous events which will precede the actual Messianic coming. It was this belief in the world's ultimate redemption that has done so much to sustain Jewish faith during the dark night of the exile. Basic to Judaism, and a source of hope and encouragement to Jews throughout the ages, the doctrine of the Messiah was upheld by all Jews everywhere until, of course, the time of the "Reform" heresies of the previous century. Alongside the Messianic belief was the equally authoritative belief in the resurrection of the dead in the millennium era. These two beliefs have helped Jews to look forward to that day of which the Bible prophesized:

It will be said on that day, "Lo, behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us, this is the Lord for whom we were waiting — let us rejoice and be happy with His salvation."³⁵

V HOW TO GET BACK

A man expressed the wish in the presence of Rabbi Shalom of Belz, Poland, to die like a good Jew. The rabbi commented, "Such a wish is wrong. It is like the wish of Balaam: 'May my soul die the death of the righteous' (Numbers 23:10). Desire rather that you may live like a good Jew, and it will follow as a consequence that you will die like a good Jew." One must choose one mitzva for which he is ready to die — namely, the mitzva which one is in the act of performing.

R. CHAYIM ME'IR YECHIEL OF MOGIELNITZA
(1789–1849)

The king of the Khazars learned from the Divine Voice which visited him that his "way of thinking was pleasing to God but not his way of doing." In other words, despite the good intentions of the Khazarian monarch, there was still something basically lacking in his mode of life. "His way of doing" was not living up to God's standards. Now, this idea of constant "doing," of 613 commandments and numerous Rabbinic ordinances to be obeyed, is probably one of the most difficult aspects of Judaism for the modern Jew to come to terms with. Indeed, a recently published volume purporting to list the "eight questions" people ask about Judaism includes the following series of queries as its second question:

Why do we need organized religion? Isn't it enough to be an ethical person? Who needs Jewish law — will observing the Sabbath or keeping kosher make me a better person?¹

Any explanation of the Torah system would supposedly be far easier if Judaism could somehow be stripped of all those regulations which modern man has found so hard to fathom. If we could only eliminate the so-called ritual elements of our faith — so the current wisdom goes — Jews would return to their faith *en masse*. It is the "Pharasaic" emphasis upon the letter, as opposed to the spirit, of the law which has turned off the Jewish masses. "Belief in God and being a nice guy, that's all it takes, or that's all it should take to make a good Jew," so says the "spirit of the age."

Now, to begin with let us simply say that there could be no greater historical or sociological nonsense than this *avant-garde* dogma of the "repellent character of ritual." Jewish legalism may need an explanation of sorts, but certainly not in order to stem any supposed defectionist tendencies. The modern Jew is simply mouthing the simplistic presuppositions of the nineteenth-century destroyers of the Jewish faith. Actually there is no need to even momentarily speculate on the results of a "Judaism minus law," for we have been watching just such results for the past 150 years and they have been totally disastrous. "Reform Judaism" has been offering, ever since the days of Israel Jacobson and the Hamburg Temple, exactly this "non-legal" Judaism, or "ethical deism" as it should be called, and it has proven to be a complete historical failure. It has brought about the greatest alienation of Jews from their faith of any time in history and in our own time has guided huge numbers of its adherents directly into intermarriage (which it now officially sanctions), and all the while it has raised the banner of "anti-legalism." The "Reformers" have been cutting off one law after another from the Divinely-ordained Torah framework and all they have to show after one hundred and fifty years of their efforts is a sterile faith and an apathetic following. Judaism plus ritual may need a rationale, but Judaism minus ritual, *a la* the "Reformers," needs absolutely none, for it lives a virtually vestigial existence in the fanciful minds of its "theologians" and is almost completely ignored by the Jewish populace. Now indeed, as we have noted before, more and more Jews *are* returning to their faith in this decidedly secular epoch. However, they are not flocking to the Hebrew Union College, the ideological bastion of the "Reformers." They are returning to the Torah Judaism of their forefathers. They have not been turned off by ritual. Quite the contrary, they have been turned on, ten-fold. They find this very legalism of Judaism to be the same source of attraction that their ancestors did, and every nuance of the law is to them added delight, in the challenging existence of the Torah life to which they are drawn.

Debunking a myth is a tiresome process. Suffice it so say that all the available evidence points to one indisputable fact, that the legalism of Judaism has not played any part in the mass flight of Jews from their faith. On the contrary, it is to the so-called "rituals" of Judaism to which the alienated Jew is attracted, rather than the utopian concepts of a "purified" ethical deism. Obviously, legalism has not been and is not unpopular amongst Jews. "And we shall rejoice in the words of the law forever" is a prayer uttered daily by observant Jews. Just a glance at the Book of Psalms should supply us with a clear idea of the relationship between the Jew and his "rituals." The Psalmist, King David, was by no means staggering under the yoke of an oppressive laws:

I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, as much as in all riches... I delight myself in Your statutes... My soul breaks for longing unto Your laws... Teach me, O God, the way of the statutes... The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver...²

A law becomes a burden only when it comes to be regarded as unnecessary or irrational. No one objects to observing laws the necessity of which he clearly perceives. It is not the laws of Judaism as such which modern Jews find difficult to accept. It is the seeming arbitrariness of many religious precepts which causes them to hesitate before subjecting themselves to their claims. The "primacy of conscience" places the burden of proof upon the Torah itself. "Why should we do this? What is the significance of that prohibition?" Of course, the most often voiced of all such questions is "How can I begin to observe the commandments before I understand them? Would that not be hypocritical?" Now at this time it would perhaps be apropos to call a short halt to our discussion in order to better understand the precise nature of the quandary confronting the modern Jew as he examines the laws of the Torah. A few important points must first be stressed.

To begin with, it should be noted that every human being observes in his daily life literally thousands of strictures the rationale for which remains totally unknown to him. Styles of dress,

social amenities and dozens of other procedural and cultural mores are never subjected to the standards of reason. We observe them simply because others do, and do not feel offended by their seeming irrationality. Life would become unlivable if we acted in any other way. There is simply no way for a human being to trace every custom which governs normal conduct in a given society back to its origin. Granted, of course, that some scholars may engage in historical inquiry into the sources of our social roots, but the vast majority of men simply observe these unwritten laws because they are used to them. Thus, we see that if a man is convinced of the overall rationality of his mode of life he can easily tolerate some seemingly irrational actions in his daily existence.

Now, returning to the questions at hand, it would seem that the modern Jew should seek to somewhat clarify his queries about Jewish law. Does he find the *mass* of Torah legislation beyond his comprehension, or just isolated parts of it? Does the Torah command a Jew to engage in great numbers of seemingly senseless activities, and then proceed to forbid, for example, the eating of certain foods? No, it does not. Instead, it commands us to honor our parents, do justice, contribute to the poor, refrain from lying, stealing and cheating, and to love our neighbors, and side by side with laws of this sort it also prohibits a limited number of foodstuffs. Clearly this sheds much light on the modern Jew's dilemma. He is not simply dealing with a mass of seemingly arbitrary decrees. On the contrary, the Torah clearly spells out the greatest and most sublime truths of human existence. It also ordains various ritual practices. The situation is somewhat analogous to human life in general. We do not stop engaging in normative social amenities because we do not understand their meaning. We observe them because all-in-all they appear to be rational. Similarly, in the case of the Jewish faith, it would be highly presumptuous of us to reject that faith *en masse* because of a few areas of it which we do not as yet comprehend. The Torah teaches great truths, Divine truths. Yet, it insists that this very structure of truths also include some laws the exact understanding of which is not readily at hand.

A second and more fundamental point must also be made. When one asks for a reason before observing a given commandment, there is invariably a certain skirting of the more basic issues involved. If the Torah is recognized as God's will for the Jewish people, then it is really of very little consequence precisely how much of that revelation is readily fathomed by finite beings. It should certainly not be a very surprising situation to find that the human intellect cannot fathom the Divine. (It would be far more surprising if it could.) The central question for a Jew is, "Did the Sinai event take place?" If we answer that question in the affirmative, then automatically all that "Moses received from Sinai" becomes relevant to us and obligatory in our daily lives. We may find a few commandments to be beyond our wisdom. The matter is simply of no consequence. We are committed to observing the commandments of God, *because they were given by God*, whose reasons are at times unfathomable. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, says the Lord," is one of the basic doctrines of the Torah. We may investigate the various explanations offered for apparently puzzling commandments (for Jews the constant probing and searching for new ramifications, for new explanations of God's statutes, is in fact a religious duty), but — and this "but" is all-important — we cannot, unless we intend to challenge the Divine nature of the Torah, we cannot condition our performance of any given precept on our prior understanding of its purpose. Again, the point must be stressed that the Torah is not composed solely of the incomprehensible. If that were the case, then conceivably an argument could begin to be made against its overall truthfulness (although even under such circumstances the discussion would still have to center on the case for or against revelation, not on the difficulties of its doctrines). However, this is obviously not so. The vast majority of Torah stipulations are either the enunciations of the greatest ethical and moral truths known to man, or the ritual symbolization of these truths. It is only a small fraction of the 613 commandments of the Torah that can be classified in what we may now describe as the *supra-rational category*. So we are forced

back to our earlier area of discussion: is the Torah true? Did God actually speak to Moses? If so, as has been believed by Jews from the moment of their historical genesis as a people, standing at the foot of Mount Sinai, up to the present, then the difficulty of fathoming a small number of *Divine* commandments should certainly present no obstacle to the overall acceptance of Torah Judaism in one's life.

In the ensuing pages, an examination of some of these very "legalisms" which have been discussed will be presented. Both the mode of practice, and some of the authoritative reasons offered for such observances, should prove helpful in understanding the precise nature of Torah Judaism.

SHABBATH — SABBATH OBSERVANCES

The Talmud relates:

God said to Moses, "I have a precious gift in my treasury, 'Sabbath' is its name, go and tell Israel that I wish to present it to them."³

A "precious gift" is how the Talmudic sages describe the *Shabbath*, that uniquely Jewish institution of total cessation from work, combined with lofty ritual practices to be carried out in a warm familial and communal atmosphere. The dignified joy and repose of this fundamental Torah institution is clearly spelled out by the German Protestant theologian [and notorious Bible-critic, certainly no friend of the Jews], Rudolf Kittel:

Anyone who has had the opportunity of knowing in our own day the inner life of Jewish families that observe the Law of the fathers with sincere piety and in all strictness, will have been astonished at the wealth of joyfulness, gratitude and sunshine, undreamt of by the outsider, which the Law animates in the Jewish home. The whole household rejoices on the Sabbath, which they celebrate with rare satisfaction, not only as the day of rest, but rather as the day of rejoicing. Jewish prayers term the Sabbath a "joy of the soul" to him who hallows it; he "enjoys the abundance of Thy goodness."

Such expressions are not mere words; they are the outcome of pure and genuine happiness and enthusiasm.⁴

Now, all this talk of delight and joy and happiness and the like may sound somewhat incongruous to those of us who are used to envisioning the Jewish Sabbath as a replica of the pinched-cheeked, somber Sabbaths associated in the public mind with John Calvin's Geneva or the Massachusetts Bay of the Puritans with their regimen of no dancing, no laughing, no strolling and so on, coupled with endless Church services and fire-breathing sermons virtually bubbling over with all the horrors and terrors of the Devil's Hell. These extremely morbid Protestant sects, with their doctrines of a predestined select elite, justification by faith and similar dogmas, have been giving a bad name to religious institutions in general during the past four hundred years and to Sabbath observance in particular. It is high time, therefore, to declare, once and for all, that these groups were in no way typical of normative orthodox faith.* They represented, in their unhappy asceticism, not the joyful devotion of traditional religion, but an aberration, one is even tempted to say a heretical aberration, the likes of which have been consistently condemned throughout the centuries of Judaism.⁵ "And God saw all that He had created and behold it was very good."⁶ The conclusion of creation is climaxed in the Torah by God's own observation that His "work was very good." Such has always been the spirit of traditional Jewish belief. Jews have always held creation to be essentially good, life to be a precious gift, and service of God to be a joyful, satisfying experience. Granted, there is much pain and suffering in the world that we are at a loss to explain, there is much wickedness and depravity amongst humanity

*We do not intend to oversimplify this matter. There is, in fact, a traditional and, therefore, legitimate strain of asceticism in Judaism. However, this asceticism never influenced the Jewish attitude to the Sabbath, which was always regarded as a time of physical as well as spiritual rejuvenation.

that shocks us, but—and this “but” is crucial—the overriding impression which creation gives us is one of love, mercy and joy.* At least it *should* give us such an impression, unless we conduct our lives not in accordance with reality, but in line with the somber pessimism of a Cotton Mather or the existentialist nihilism of a Jean-Paul Sartre.

The Jewish Sabbath is the spiritual and physical embodiment of the Psalmist's exalted cry, “Serve God in joy, go before Him in song.”⁷ With its combination of prayer and prayerful song, festive meals and devotional tunes, religious study and bodily relaxation, prohibition of business combined with family congeniality, the Sabbath has rightfully been dubbed the “foundation of faith” by the Jewish sages. Even the least religiously cognizant Jew is usually aware of the extensive preparations which precede the actual arrival of the Jewish Sabbath. On Friday afternoons the home is transformed into a virtual beehive of activity in anticipation of the arrival of that beloved guest, the Sabbath. The Talmud relates the following parable:

When the seventh day of the creation was consecrated by God as the Sabbath, the day of rest, it complained, “O, mighty Lord, every day of the week is associated with another: Sunday with Monday; Tuesday with Wednesday; and Thursday with Friday; but I stand alone, without an associate.”

God replied, “I have provided an associate for you, a bridegroom.”

“Who might that be?” asked the Sabbath.

“None other,” replied God, “than My people, Israel. You shall be the bride and my people the bridegroom.”⁸

*One hesitates to dismiss the evil and pain of existence in such a seemingly cavalier manner. It would be a callousness of the highest order to claim that all suffering is clearly understandable to finite man. At best we can only say that God's wisdom is at times beyond us.

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As the Sabbath arrives shortly before sundown on Friday after-
noon* even the most meager Jewish dwelling has been completely
re-invigorated. The silverware, candle-holders and trays have all
been thoroughly polished. Clean linen has been placed on the
beds. The floors are clean and well-washed, and the table, where
the three traditional meals are to be held, is covered with a spar-
kling white tablecloth. Not only is the house redone, so to speak,
but so is the individual Jew. One's body must be washed and
bathed before the advent of the Sabbath, and fresh and clean
clothes are to be worn in honor of the holy quality of the day.

The joyful sanctity of the Sabbath is further distinguished by
a total elimination of workday worries and concerns. All creative
work outside the realm of the strictly spiritual, all financial dealings,
all extensive travel and other similar activities are prohibited. Now
it is here, at the total prohibition of work, that, for the modern
Jew, difficulties begin to set in. So long as the *Shabbath* is con-
fined to wine, *challa*, and gefilte fish it appears to be a singularly
jovial affair, but this "no smoking, no car, no TV" business is a
bit beyond the realm of contemporary Jewry. Instead of accepting
the Sabbath as a Divine institution with various ordinances to be
followed, most of them comprehensible, perhaps some not quite
so, the modern Jew sets himself up as a supra-theologian, capable
of separating the chaff from the wheat in God's revelation. The
result is the "compromise Sabbath" of our modern age and, as is
usually the case with compromise religions and their practices, it
has resulted in mass indifference on the part of the bulk of the
people involved. For by eliminating huge portions of the Sabbath
legislation, the proponents of "compromise Sabbath" have quite
simply not only allowed us to enjoy the Friday Night Fights and
the N.C.A.A. Game of the Week, but they have cut out the
whole Sabbath idea. The *raison d'être* of the Jewish Sabbath is not
physical rest or sentimental cultural affiliation, it is the observance

*The Jewish day is a twenty-four-hour period from sunset to sunset,
not from midnight to midnight. This is based on biblical sources.

of the Biblical commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."⁹ Now one does not begin to "remember" something by choosing to forget basic parts of it. Eventually, as history and practical experience together testify, one tends to forget the whole thing. Sabbath observance is vibrant and prosperous only among those Jews who have kept it as God Himself established it, without rationalizations and preconditions. It was only as a uniquely Divine institution that Shabbath has been a source of light and happiness to the Jewish people, and it will only be through the observance of all the Sabbath laws, those we like along with those we don't, that Jews shall continue to feel the spirit of the *Lecha Dodi* prayer, sung for hundreds of years in synagogues the world over:

Come in peace, O crown of your bridegroom, come with joy and good cheer, into the midst of God's faithful, chosen people: Come, O Bride, come, O Bride, come O Bride, Sabbath, the queenly Bride. Come, my friend, to meet the Bride, let us welcome the Sabbath.

The theme which runs through most of the Sabbath prohibitions is that *creative* work is forbidden. Thus, we see (and traditional Jewish sages throughout the centuries have also emphasized this point) that by observing the Sabbath laws the Jew testifies to the fact that God is the ultimate source of creation and that man, far from being the master of his environment, must acknowledge God's rule over all. This is why the Sabbath is constantly referred to in the liturgy as "a remembrance of the act of creation." Of course, this lesson is only one of many which the Sabbath teaches us. In addition it should be pointed out that the Torah, being the Will of God whose "understanding is not our understanding," has manifold reasons for its commandments which are completely beyond human comprehension.

The details of Sabbath observance can be found by the English reader in the "Abridged Code of Jewish Law" (*Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*) by Rabbi Shlomo Ganzfried (translated from the Hebrew

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original by Rabbi Hyman Goldin), specifically chapters 72-96. It is available from the Hebrew Publishing Company in New York City, or from almost any Jewish bookseller. Another important volume which provides the reader not only with a detailed description of the legal aspects of the Sabbath, but also with the inner meaning of many of the rituals and prohibitions associated with the day, is the popular classic, *The Sabbath: A Guide to Its Understanding and Observance* by Dayan Dr. L. Grunfeld, published by Philipp Feldheim Inc., of New York and, again, available through most Jewish book dealers.

Suffice it to say that the Sabbath atmosphere would be as good a place as any to begin on "the road back" and to grasp the true atmosphere of Torah observance. The Sabbath testifies to some of the basic principles of the Jewish faith and has been loved and honored by our people from the time of its establishment. In times of the greatest physical and material stress, under Magi persecution, in eighth-century Babylonia, under Torquemada's terror in fifteenth-century Spain, under poverty and privation in the medieval ghetto, down to our own day under the barbarism of Hitler and Stalin, Jews have observed the Sabbath as the Torah itself foretold:

And the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to fulfill the Sabbath in all generations, as an everlasting covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever, that in six days God created heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He ceased and rested.¹⁰

Dayan Grunfeld relates the following incident in his volume, as reported by an eye-witness who managed to escape:

The train dragged on with its human freight. Pressed together like cattle in the crowded trucks, the unfortunate occupants were unable to move. The atmosphere was stifling. As the Friday afternoon wore on, the Jews and Jewesses in the Nazi transport sank deeper and deeper into their own misery.

Suddenly an old Jewish woman managed with a great effort to move and open her bundle. Laboriously she drew out two candlesticks and two *challoth*. She had just prepared

them for Sabbath when she was dragged from her home that morning. They were the only things she had thought worthwhile taking with her. Soon the Sabbath candles lit up the faces of the tortured Jews and the song of *Lecha Dodi* transformed the scene. Sabbath with its atmosphere of peace had descended upon them all.¹¹

The Sabbath has always elevated the Jewish soul to sublime and decidedly non-temporal heights. The Talmud teaches:

On the Sabbath, man is endowed with an additional soul, which is taken away from him at the conclusion of the Sabbath.¹²

The prophet Isaiah perhaps best summed up the special meaning of the Sabbath when, through the vehicle of the Sacred Spirit, he said:

If, because of the Sabbath, you will restrain your foot from pursuing your ordinary endeavors on My holy day, and if you will call the Sabbath a delight, if you have honored the day that was sanctified by God, and if you honor it by refraining from the completion of your errands, by desisting from your weekly pursuits even in your speech, then you will feel delight in God; I shall cause you to ascend to the high places of the earth and enjoy the inheritance of your father Jacob, for the mouth of God has spoken it.¹³

KASHRUTH — THE DIETARY LAWS

The moral law, to which the vast majority of humanity readily gives its assent and attempts, however carelessly, to observe, is not always a bed of roses. Honoring one's parents, telling the truth, dealing honestly with our fellowmen, can easily become an exceedingly irksome affair. Honesty and morality and the like are clearly not always the best policy, that is, in terms of practical results. However, despite the sometimes painful quality of its restraints, no one, save the nihilistic secular-relativist, would deny the validity of the moral law on the basis of its inconvenience. Human beings seek to observe the dictates of morality not because those dictates are especially pleasing or satisfying, but because they

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are true. With these obvious principles as a frame of reference, we can now examine a section of the Divine law which, although it has always been difficult to observe, remains a fundamental part of the Torah structure.

The Jewish dietary laws, the laws of kosher and non-kosher foods, represent for the modern Jew one of the more foreboding obstacles on "the road back" to his faith. These laws, by virtue of their seemingly irrational character and their annoying difficulty to keep, are usually among the first to be abandoned by Jews deserting their faith. Prayer, the Sabbath and many of the ritual commandments of the Torah can all be tolerated by "reasonable men," but this "no pork, no meat and milk together, kosher slaughter," well, it just seems so far-fetched, so downright absurd. "How," asks the skeptical Jew, "can the transcendent, merciful, rational God of the Jewish faith place so much emphasis upon these apparently unfathomable dietary laws?"

On one point, though, there is clearly little room for dispute. The importance of the laws of *kashruth* in the Torah system clearly cannot be denied. First in the eleventh chapter of Leviticus, and then repeated in the ninth chapter of Deuteronomy, the dietary laws are spelled out in God's revelation in infinite detail. The Torah is quite emphatic about it, as in these verses:

You shall differentiate between the pure beast and the impure, and between the pure fowl and the impure; and you shall not make your souls detestable by beast, or by fowl, or by anything which the ground teems, which I have set apart for you to hold impure. And you shall be holy unto Me; for I the Lord am holy, and I have set you apart from the peoples, that you should be Mine.¹⁴

There is simply no way to avoid the obvious fact that these laws, which seem so foreign to our modern sensibilities, were accorded a prime place in the Creator's scheme of things. Actually, we are here confronting, for the first time in our exploration of the Jewish faith, ritual laws the rationale of which is not readily accessible. There are, of course, many reasons offered by the great sages and

mystics of the Jewish tradition for all of these and other somewhat inexplicable ordinances. However, after all is said and done, the *kashruth* laws do, indeed, remain in the category of *chukim*, that is, Divine statutes the ultimate understanding of which is withheld from temporal man.

We are by no means free, though, due to this lack of comprehensibility, to become in any way lax in our observance of these laws. Once we have arrived at the point where we hold the Torah to be God's authentic revelation it is unimportant if certain aspects of that revelation should appear puzzling. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch eloquently expressed these truths:

You should observe the commandments of the Torah and have regard to its laws, because they are God's behests and the limits set to man by God, not because you too think them correct. Even those commandments whose reason you believe you have understood, you should not fulfill because of this, for then you would be listening only to yourself, whereas you should listen to God. You should obey because God has given you the commandments and, as with all creatures, so should you also be God's servant with every manifestation of your being. That is your destiny.

... And how can you be sure you have grasped the reason for these Divine laws? Do you really know the nature of the creatures around you? Do you know your own nature? How nourishment is related to the bodily powers, and bodily powers to those of the soul, the organ of which is the body? Only when you know this — not only theories concerning it — only when you know yourself and your exact place in the sphere of creation as your Creator knows you and your place — only then may you be surprised at not being able to understand the reason for these laws. Allow yourself, therefore, to be guided by your Creator and your God, Who has led you out of Egypt so that you will be holy unto Him — and be holy as He is holy and summons you to holiness.¹⁵

Maimonides concludes his discussion of forbidden foods in the *Mishneh Torah*, his compendium of Torah laws, with this thought:

He who is observant in these matters will bring holiness and abundant purity to his soul and he cleanses his soul for the sake of the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it is written, "And you shall make yourselves holy and be holy, for I am holy."¹⁶

Morris Joseph, an Anglo-Jewish rabbi (1848-1930), writes in his *Judaism as Life and Creed*:

Is there not something spiritually attractive in the idea of the Jew of this age voluntarily submitting to restrictions on his appetites for the sake of duty — forming one of a religious guild whose special characteristic is self-control? It ought to be the pride of the modern Jew and every child should be taught to feel it — that his religion demands from him a self-abnegation from which other religionists are absolved; that the price to be paid for the privilege of belonging to the hierarchy of Israel is continuous and conscious self-sacrifice. The dietary laws foster this spirit of self-surrender. Respect for them teaches and helps the Jew, in Rabbinic language, to "abate his desires before the will of his Father in Heaven."¹⁷

So, there you have it, as they say. The kosher laws are a sort of make-it-or-break-it point for the Jew on the road back, "fourth down and goal to go" in the vernacular. Either you do it or you don't. Either one submits to God and His infinite wisdom or one goes back to "compromise Judaism." Either one is willing to practice one's convictions in day-to-day situations, despite the hardships,* or one consigns oneself to the camp of the eternal pussy-footers.

The best place to go for an introduction to the practical world of kosher laws would be the *Abridged Code of Jewish Law* (op. cit.), chapters 36, 38, 46 and 47. In addition, *The Practical Guide to Kashruth*, by Rabbi S. Wagschal, published by the Gateshead Foun-

*Which have recently been greatly minimized. There is a Jewish group which gives matching grants to those interested in *kashruth* observance in their homes.¹⁸

dation for Torah, in Gateshead, England, is a thorough work on the basics of *kashruth*, that can be had in English and must be regarded as a classic, being intelligible and helpful to both scholar and layman alike. The most encompassing study of the dietary laws is *The Jewish Dietary Laws* by Dayan L. Grunfeld, published by the Soncino Press. This work combines scholarship and literary style in a complete presentation of all the kosher laws and their significance.¹⁹

In addition, in our own age of automated mass-production it is a necessity for the *kashruth* observer to acquaint himself with the *kashruth* of mass-marketed products. This is not as hard as it seems. Thanks to the work of many diligent Torah organizations dedicated to the observance of the kosher laws, there are readily available to the consumer, in any part of the country, kosher food products which are the equivalent of anything on the supermarket shelf. There is, however, the drawback that at times kosher products do cost more. The constant observation required, the replacement of more readily available materials by their kosher counterparts, is sometimes a costly process. This is, of course, unfortunate, but as the popular maxim has it, "you get what you pay for." All the information about which products are kosher and who guarantees their *kashruth*, as well as a technical explanation as to why such guarantees are called for, can be found in the excellent booklet, *A Guide to Kashrus*, available from the Kashrus Division of the Student Organization of Yeshiva University in New York City.²⁰

By observing the dietary laws, the Jew testifies to the existence of a Divine legislation, promulgated at Sinai and at times beyond human understanding. He readily submits to the strictures of revelation, because his faith and reason lead him to assent to its truthfulness as the expression of the Will of God. As Rabbi Hirsch writes,

...one thing is certain: high above all human speculation stands the Torah, the law of Israel's life, eternal and immutable like the laws by which the planets move in the sky

and the grain of seed grows in the soil. The same God who laid down the law which nature of necessity follows, also pronounced the law which Jewry is asked to follow of its own free will. And just as the laws of nature are unchangeable — despite what any opinion may hold — so all speculations on the laws of the Torah can only be an enlightenment of our own minds, but never the cause of their validity, for the *causa causarum* of the laws of the Torah is . . . God.²¹

Modern man does not happily obey the dicta of sources outside of himself. He considers himself and his own wants and needs to be the centermost point of his life. Outside influences are unwanted and even resented in an age when everything is okay, so long as it is performed by adults, or by a consenting adult. Whether stated by Manchester liberals or hippie hedonists, the epigram "Don't tread on me" is symbolic of our age. We covet our individualism, our privacy, our material things in order to . . . well, in order to . . . covet them some more, perhaps? It is not surprising, then, to find the modern Jew rejecting, with a vehemence typical of the age, a system of laws the ultimate rationalization of which must forever lie beyond him. His forefathers, however, as they stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, promised just the opposite. They, realizing the supernatural nature of the phenomena which were taking place, unanimously pledged to God that their observances of the Torah would not be based upon their ability to comprehend every nuance of its ordinances. On the contrary they declared, in a manner probably puzzling to moderns, that they would fulfill the Torah's demands, before they had even received it.

To the individual Jew who finds his status as a "true believer" in the conventional wisdoms of our age both intellectually and emotionally limiting, there is much to be said in favor of his adopting the traditional laws of *kashruth*. Not in the sense of the subjectivist-anarchistic cry to "find freedom in an unfree world" by flouting all standards beyond those of subjectivist selfishness, but in the sense of subordinating one's feelings to the voices of faith and reason as they manifest themselves via a total

commitment to the truthfulness of the historical breakthrough in the Sinai desert. To refrain from eating *treifa*, non-kosher food, for no other reason than in obedience to one's Creator is to take one giant step on "the road back."

TEFILLA — JEWISH PRAYER

Rabbi Noah of Lechovitch, a Russian chasidic leader of the nineteenth century, once remarked:

Our sages have referred to prayer as a "work of the heart." Why did they employ the term "work"? They meant to compare the "work" of prayer to other forms of work, such as work on a field, work in a shop, etc. What is the result of work in its literal sense, if not the eventual improvement of the article worked on? Similarly, the "work of the heart," prayer, leads to the ultimate betterment of one's heart.

The God of traditional faith is a merciful God, a loving God, a tender God, who constantly expresses His affection for the human race through millions of day-to-day little-recognized kindnesses. He is also a just God, who according to His wisdom judges mankind in truth, exacting from every individual a certain standard, mitigated, of course, according to environment, ability and the like as only He is capable of doing. The historical reaction of religious man to this God has always been, in whatever cultural circumstances, to pray — to offer thanks to God for His goodness, to ask for His favor, forgiveness, redemption, and the like. Thus has man from time immemorial turned to God in the adoration of prayer. When the world was young, prayer in word or in deed, as symbolized by the sacrificial system, was the instinctual approach of so-called "primitive" man toward his concept of the Deity. In our own era even the self-proclaimed atheists of the French Revolution enthroned a "Goddess of Reason" in Notre Dame cathedral and invented a weird creed dedicated to the traditional worship of a not-so-traditional "transcendence." Constantly seeking God, humanity has found Him throughout the ages in worship. Troubled man, sinful man, thankful man has always prayed.

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With the dawn of philosophy as we know it, in ancient Greece, humanity's natural attachment to prayer was subject to a refined critical analysis. From that challenge emerged many sophisticated and refined explanations of many of the deeper aspects of prayer. As far as the Jews were concerned, the practice of prayer was already being refined, as many doctrines and texts associated with prayer were formulated long before the classical era. The Jewish philosophy of prayer has been analyzed by Maimonides, Rabbi Yehuda haLevi, the medieval mystics, the chasidic leaders and literally thousands of other Torah leaders throughout history. Wherever this process of re-examination and re-interpretation has led, though, one fact remains continually true, beyond a shadow of a doubt—namely, that a society which is God-centered will pray and that its prayer will be composed of two parts, thanksgiving and supplication. The philosophers may examine the meaning of prayer as it relates to God's omnipotence and eternity. The mystics may point to hidden cosmological significance in our prayers. The skeptic may doubt the efficacy of prayer, but for the "common man," who may not be quite as "common" as the "experts" would want us to believe, prayer has always been, and as far as is rationally foreseeable will continue to be, the natural meeting ground between God and man—a sort of demilitarized zone between heaven and earth, where temporal man speaks to supernatural God. When emotions are intense, when appreciation, anxiety, or fear are present, prayer invariably enters the picture. "There are no atheists in foxholes," or so we are told.

The sages of the Mishna have embodied in the Jewish order of prayer the two key elements of man's instinctual relationship to God, namely *hodaya* and *bakasha*, thanks and entreaty. One's obligation of prayer is not considered fulfilled until both these emotions are expressed. It is upon these two component parts that Jewish prayer is based and, as Hillel said in a different context, "all the rest is commentary."

To consider the mere fact of the world's existence and one's own gift of life as a topic for thanks is perhaps a difficult concept

for the twentieth-century-ite, deluded as he has been by various forms of pessimistic secularism. Indeed, the optimism of the secular humanists, of the Bertrand Russells, John Deweys, Erich Fromms and so on, has apparently done little to cheer up secular modern man as he contemplates his value-less, senseless, purposeless universe in which God is not only supposedly dead but, as Nietzsche writes, "dead, by our own hands." On this point I must admit that I feel that the pessimists have certainly got the humanists over a barrel, and the man in the street apparently senses the situation. There is simply no way for the Sullivans, Mays, Fromms, Rogers, and other secular-humanist psychologists to sell us an optimistic picture of humanistic self-fulfillment, if they cannot even verify the true nature of human existence, much less attest to some objective, or even subjective, standard by which to measure fulfillment. There is simply no reason for the humanists to hope and work for universal human happiness, if there is no such thing as hope or universal standards. Without a belief in the essential reality of existence, in eternal norms of right and wrong, of which the only ultimate basis is, of course, a concept of a moral Creator, we must admit that the Kafkas and the Becketts present a much more accurate portrayal of the state of man's condition than the editors of *The Humanist* do.

However, for the man of faith the situation is quite different. His life is not meaningless and its benefits are, for him, entirely real. The sense of gratitude which the religious man feels toward his Creator is a logical result of his not having to view the world through the dark-tinted glasses of a constantly dissatisfied secularist. It would be well-nigh impossible to relate all the loving-kindnesses with which God has imbued the universe. In the Jewish prayerbook we find the following devotional:

... though our mouths were to be filled with song as the sea, and our tongues with joy's outpouring as the swell of its waves, and our lips with praise as the expanse of Heaven, and though our eyes were brilliant as the sun and the moon, our hands spread out like the eagles of the heavens, and

our feet as light as the deer—we would still be unable to thank You, God, our God and God of our fathers, and to bless Your Name for even one thousandth of the countless millions of favours which You have bestowed upon our fathers and upon us....

Food, clothing, shelter, friends, family, health and times of happiness are among the constant manifestations of God's love for humanity. Food, as God has granted it to humans, is not a tasteless, pleasureless, albeit life-sustaining gift, but a fragrant, beautiful array of an almost infinite variety of delicacies. Hundreds of fruits, vegetables, meats, fish, pastries and beverages are presented to man. Clothing is provided by an all-knowing Creator in thousands of textures, shapes, qualities and styles, in order to benefit man. Shelter to maintain man against the elements is given in the form of abundant natural resources, which, though squandered and destroyed by the wanton greed and hedonism of thoughtless men, still remain plentiful enough to satisfy the needs of humanity. Friends to comfort us in times of sorrow and rejoice with us in times of happiness are all part of a gracious God's master plan to serve the innermost needs of humankind. Families, the ultimate happiness and source of joy and fulfillment, have been set up from the time of Paradisial Man to enable men, women and children to fully realize themselves in relation to their loved ones. Health is another gift, more fully appreciated when we contemplate those who are unfortunately deprived of it. Happiness in all its manifestations—joy, satisfactions, a sense of accomplishment and many more—are all present in this world of ours, the handiwork of a loving God.

Thus, we thank God because we have much to be thankful for. This is especially true in the case of the Jewish people who, as the recipients of God's revelation, as the people most totally under obligation to fulfill it, are beneficiaries of the Creator's abundant love in a manner almost too stupendous to comprehend. Chosen by God to be His special vehicle for fulfillment of the Divine will, the Jews are uniquely obligated to offer thanks to God.

At this point, one can almost hear the modern reader complaining, "Granted that God should be praised and thanked, but Jewish prayer isn't all that simple. Three times a day, every day in the year. Our debt to God is indeed great, but couldn't we repay it in our own time?"

Now, for anyone who has allowed the lawn to go unmowed in order to see the N.F.L. Game of the Week, for anyone who has failed to balance the checkbook in order to finish an engrossing novel, the above objection would seem quite naive. Given the normal human inclination toward sloth and indolence, the debt owed to God would probably never be repaid on some sort of man-made installment basis. Granted, of course, that fixed prayers sometimes leave something to be desired as opposed to spontaneous outpourings of devotion (although Judaism certainly encourages such originality), there is simply no other way to overcome our deeply imbedded human indifference to things spiritual.

Therefore, Jews pray three times a day, in the morning, afternoon and evening. There are fixed and carefully designated times during which each prayer may be appropriately offered. Of course, much of the actual Jewish prayer is a mechanical thing. Most people can't bring themselves to a high spiritual level three times a day, much as they would like to. That is unfortunate and sometimes disconcerting. A stranger in a synagogue would probably be very surprised at the nonchalant attitude of most traditional worshippers. Alas, however, that is the stuff that human beings are generally made of. It is certainly not the ideal prayer which Jewish law calls for, but we cannot attain the ideal all the time. We must not fall prey to the temptation, altogether too prevalent among people seeking to reclaim their faith, of being "turned off" by the failure of experienced religionists to lead exceptionally devotional lives. A return to Torah does not represent an entry into utopia, to a world populated by angelic beings. It means, instead, a return to the laws of God and the ability to ask and receive His forgiveness. Talking about forgiveness brings us to the Jewish doctrine of a merciful God, who is willing to forgive the sins of the truly

contrite of heart who, in a spirit of repentance, asks to have his "iniquities" blotted out. This belief is asserted by Jews not only because it is representative of mankind's instinctual feelings towards God, but first and foremost because of the supra-historical event of the giving of the Torah in the Sinai Desert. For in that Torah the theme of a benevolent, personal God, interested in the lives and prayers of His creatures, runs like a brilliant thread from Genesis to Chronicles. Despite the Bible critics' false posturings, there is nothing even remotely resembling the "savage God of revenge" of popular myth, in the Torah. Instead we witness a God who is

...merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. . . .²²

It is to this Loving God, who has revealed certain attributes of His to man, that Jews pray. They may turn to their philosophers to reconcile some doctrines concerning God's nature with those of the power of prayer, and to their saints to point out the many not-readily apparent benefits of our prayers. All this theologizing, however, is for the huge majority of Jews generally and perhaps regrettably irrelevant. They turn not to cold doctrines, but to God of whom they know, as their forefathers knew before them, that "You hear the prayers of all the mouths of Your people, Israel, in mercy."²³

Before proceeding to the practical requirements of Jewish prayer, it would be wise to bear in mind the tremendous potential for self-education which the Jewish system of fixed prayers is replete with. Prayer can, as the Lechovitcher teaches, serve to better one's heart. This theme is constantly emphasized by Rabbi Hirsch, who writes:

In life itself, you do not gather the strength for living. . . . You cannot equip yourself to fight against inner and outer dangers, against troubles and passions, when you are engulfed in the very midst of the battle. Life often robs you of the power and strength its circumstances make necessary. . . . Accordingly, you should at times tear yourself from this existence which endangers your true life, and strive in *tefilla*

(prayer) to renew your strength for life and regain your right and your will for truth, righteousness and love, as well as the power and courage for victorious battle.²⁴

The legal aspects of Jewish prayer are spelled out in the *Abridged Code of Jewish Law* (*op. cit.*) in chapters 5-8, 14-26, 69, 70, 76, and 96. A prayerbook with a good English translation is, of course, much to be desired by the Jew on "the road back." The Phillip Birnbaum translation, with explanatory and historical notes, published by the Hebrew Publishing Company, is just about the best work around. It is available in several editions of varying size and quality. A prayerbook with English translation and running commentary by Rabbi Hirsch, often quoted in these pages, is available from Philipp Feldheim, Inc. On the meaning of various prayers, a popular work entitled *The World of Prayer*, by Elie Munk (also published by Feldheim) is widely used.²⁵

TEFILLIN AND TZITZITH — PHYLACTERIES AND TASSELS

The Divinely ordained Jewish faith frequently commands the portrayal of certain eternal truths in symbolic physical actions. Both the *tefillin*, or phylacteries, small leather boxes encasing handwritten parchments of Biblical passages to be worn on one's arm and head during the morning services, and the *tzitzith*, the four-cornered fringed garment traditionally worn by observant Jews during all their waking hours, are vivid incarnations of some of the greatest truths of the Torah faith.

The *tefillin* contain four Biblical sections which, in the words of the *Sefer haChinuch*, were selected

...in preference to all the other passages of the Torah, because they embrace the acceptance of the Kingdom of Heaven, the unity of the Creator and the exodus from Egypt — fundamental doctrines of Judaism.²⁶

In donning the *tefillin* the Jew is bidden to meditate that God has commanded him "to place the *tefillin* on his hand as a memorial of His outstretched hand, which manifested itself at the time of

life and regain your rightness and love, as well as your battle.²⁴

expelled out in the *Abridged* 5-8, 14-26, 69, 70, 76, and translation is, of course, the road back." The Phillip and historical notes, publication, is just about the best editions of varying size and relation and running comparison these pages, is available listing of various prayers, a prayer, by Elie Munk (also

AND TASSELS

frequently commands the symbolic physical actions. leather boxes encasing hands to be worn on one's arm and the *tzitzith*, the four worn by observant Jews incarnations of some of

which, in the words of

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men to meditate that God on his hand as a memorialized itself at the time of

the Egyptian redemption," and on his head, "thereby teaching that the mind, whose seat is in the brain, together with all senses and faculties, is to be subjected to His service, blessed be He.²⁷

The *tefillin* are referred to in several biblical passages as a sign.²⁸ They represent a vivid and visible embodiment of Jewish doctrines, which, in lieu of such "organic" rituals, would tend, as mere intellectual creeds generally do, to be forgotten over the years. Instead, through the daily procedure of donning *tefillin*, they are brought into constant focus. However mechanical the wearing of *tefillin* may become for the Torah Jew — and, as is the case with most acts performed on a daily basis, it does indeed become a rote procedure for many — there is the ever-present aura, however subconscious at times, of the spiritual concepts involved.

The idea of exalting and promoting fundamental principles through sensory, audio-visual methods is fully recognized by all students of the human psyche. It appears to be part of the make-up of the human constitution to act out, so to speak, those areas of his endeavors which are of supreme importance to him. In recognition of this fact, the Creator in His revelation, the Torah, has ordained many ritual acts to help us learn the lessons of life. Rabbi Hirsch explains it thus:

...the mere acknowledgement of essential principles of life does not suffice for the building up of a life of such endeavors in righteousness and love. There is need, in addition thereto, of symbolic words and acts which shall stamp them indelibly upon your soul, and thus preserve them for you and for others. If a truth is to produce results, it must be impressed upon the heart and mind repeatedly and emphatically.... The symbols (instituted by God) are chiefly those of acts, of practices which serve as signs of an idea.... [Each of these symbolic rituals] is a written note, a word, a sermon addressed to the reverent soul. They are, all of them, reminders or vivid expressions of sentiment by means of the significant language of action.²⁹

It was one of the greatest evils perpetrated by the non-believers

of the early days of the Enlightenment, and later in the jungle atmosphere of revolutionary France, to paint a picture of man as a basically rational creature devoid of emotions, feelings, loyalties, devoid even of a heart. This severance of one faculty of man from all others, this distorted picture of the human condition, gave rise to many of the unrealistic ideological dogmas which have plagued mankind for the past two hundred years. The romantic reaction, which began in many quarters as an antidote to the excesses of the *philosophes* and their ilk, also postulated an essentially unreal description of man as a basically emotional creature. In fact, the truth lies, as is usually the case with truth, somewhere between these two extremes. Human beings are vastly complex, composed of both rational and emotional elements. It is only in traditional faith that this fact is clearly taken into consideration. The Torah is a vast area, of which our sages say, "Occupy yourself with it over and over again, for everything is contained in it."³⁰ It contains intellectual doctrines which have occupied the philosophically inclined minds of our people for centuries, faith requirements which have excited the depths of religious experience of saints and mystics, and ritual laws which through their appeal to both the rational and emotive faculties of man have quickened both the heart and mind of our people from the Sinai desert down to the modern era.

If there is one field in which modernism in all its various forms has failed contemporary man and especially youth, it has been in its inability to achieve just such a synthesis between mind and heart, between faith and reason. Modern man is confronted by a set of stark either/or alternatives. Either "rational" Randian objectivism or "emotional" Zen Buddhism. Either "rational" Skinnerian determinism or "emotional" transcendental meditation. Either "rational" Marxist dialectics or "emotional" soul rock. The younger generation appears to have an especially acute nose for sniffing out the essential limitations of all our twentieth-century panaceas and, despite their temporary attachment to "gurus" of all creeds, they eventually, for the most part, remain skeptical and

disoriented. The secular creeds which they have sampled have failed to satisfy them, and unfortunately the ultimate truth, God's revelation, the Torah synthesis of mind and heart, of intellect and emotion, of study and ritual, is virtually unknown to them. As the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, once lamented,

Our young people are pounding on our doors . . . they cry out, "Our lives are empty of meaning." They have received no Jewish education which would make them aware that what *they themselves* are subconsciously really after with their demands — is Judaism. . . . They know only that their life is an empty shell, hollow and devoid of any engaging purpose, meaning or goal. . . . The various pursuits to which he [the disoriented youth] has devoted his time and energy have utterly failed to enthrall or captivate his soul. With growing perplexity, he has continued to follow these pursuits as a result only of habit and at the prodding of his environment, society, . . . parents, etc. Ultimately, our young people wander away into many strange and alien paths in a search for some meaningfulness in what they do — but time and again, they meet with frustration. After each new and different "experience" their lives remain as hollow as ever, but a new element of bitterness — the bitterness of repeated frustration and disappointment — begins to color their outlook . . . when our youth come pounding on the door, crying out the various demands and slogans that express the hollowness of their lives, *we*, who are fortunate enough to know that the true, serene and ennobling content of the life of a Jew has always been and will always be *the Torah*, must give them the genuine Torah-education which is the real object of their search. Only then will they . . . achieve true happiness.³¹

This very process of Torah-education is by no means limited to a mere intellectual study of the ancient texts. It implies a total educational process, combining the practice of the ritual commandments, the "testimonies" as Rabbi Hirsch calls them, with an ever-increasing awareness of the content of Jewish faith. Wearing *tefillin*

is part of this never-ending practice of exalting God in our lives with all human faculties, so typical of the Torah system.

In a similar vein, the wearing of a four-cornered garment with ritual fringes or *tzitzith* is a continual reminder for the Torah Jew of his unique relationship with God. As we read in the Torah itself:

...and it shall be unto to you for a fringe, that you may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them, and that you go not about after your own heart and your own eyes, after which you used to go astray, that you may remember and keep all My commandments and be holy unto your God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; I am the Lord your God.³²

Reflecting on the above verses, the great medieval Bible commentator, Rabbi Ovadia Seforno, writes:

...through wearing *tzitzith* you shall remember that you are servants to God, may He be blessed, that you received his commandments with an oath and a sworn declaration... and through this [seeing the *tzitzith*] you shall fear to turn after your heart's evil desires, be they excessive wealth, or glory...³³

Rabbi Hirsch expresses similar thoughts:

If we consider how the Torah expresses the meaning and purpose of these *tzitzith* threads on our garments, there can be absolutely no doubt on the matter. Quite clearly they are to be reminders, calling to mind the Divine Torah and our duty to it, to guard us against wrong ideas which would lead us to defection from God and our duty; and to keep us faithful, pure and holy to our mission on earth as human beings and Jews.³⁴

The *tzitzith* are to be woven and tied in a certain way with specific materials, in a definite order, which is laden every step of the way with deep religious symbolism. They are referred to in the Zohar,³⁵ together with the *tefillin*, as the "vessels of war" in the fight against inner evil, to be worn by the Jew. What more fitting phrase could

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be used to describe these two rituals, which in our own time do so much to help the Jew in his struggle to maintain his devotion to God in an increasingly antagonistic and hostile world.

Details of *tefillin* and *tzitzith* laws can be found respectively in chapters 10 and 9 of the *Abridged Code of Jewish Law*.³⁶ Any neighborhood Jewish bookstore should have or be able to procure both *tefillin* and *tzitzith* for anyone interested.³⁷ The procedure for putting on these articles can be found in any Jewish prayerbook.

TAHARAT HA-MISHPACHA — FAMILY PURITY

One of the paramount areas of Torah law, and sadly one of the most neglected, is that governing marriage and married life. However, this book is intended for Jews of all ages and stations in life, and I therefore deem it improper to cover this topic in detail in our current context.³⁸ The appropriate areas in the *Abridged Code of Jewish Law* are chapters 145-162. An excellent introductory work on the sometimes complex ramifications of Jewish married life would be *Daughters of Israel: Laws of Family Purity*, by Kalman Kahana, translated by Leonard Oschry, published by Feldheim Publishers. For a deeper understanding of the underpinnings of these laws there are two excellent works, also published by Feldheim. Rabbi Norman Lamm has written *A Hedge of Roses*, and by Rav Joseph Breuer we have *The Jewish Marriage: Source of Sanctity*, both eloquent analyses of this highly significant field.

We have now examined several different types of the Torah's laws. The Sabbath with its combination of the physical and spiritual is a unique institution through which the Jew testifies to God's creation of the world and His control over it. *Kashruth* laws, by virtue of their seemingly irrational nature, are a fitting means through which the Jew admits the limitations of his finite nature and the supremacy of God's wisdom. In prayer the Jew is permitted to speak to God on a personal level, while through the laws of *tefillin* and *tzitzith* the Jew symbolically incarnates the truths of faith. The

laws of family purity are also an important part of the Divinely ordained system of traditional morality.

In the previous pages we have only begun to scratch the surface of Torah law. There are many, many laws which are obligatory upon all Jews. To some, this vast array of legalities is foreboding, but as Rabbi Chananya ben Akashya said some two thousand years ago:

The Holy One, blessed be He, desired to bestow great favors on Israel; hence He gave them Torah and laws in abundant measure. For it is said, "God was pleased for the sake of His righteousness to render the Torah increasingly great and glorious."³⁹

Jews have never regarded the demands of their faith as burdensome. On the contrary, each *mitzva* is looked upon as a special gift of God. The Jewish people traditionally recite on holidays the following prayer:

You have chosen us from among all peoples; You have loved us and taken pleasure in us. You have exalted us above all tongues and have sanctified us by Your commandments. You, O our King, have drawn us near to Your service and have called Your great and holy name upon us.⁴⁰

The story is related that Rabbi Elijah of Vilna, the phenomenal Torah giant of the eighteenth century, as he lay on his death bed, sighed and remarked:

What a sad thing it is, to leave this world of God's, where for only a few *kopeks* one can purchase a four-cornered garment, affix to it few strings and thereby fulfill the will of the Creator.

Jews have traditionally delighted in the very intricate character of Torah law. All of the Jewish people have throughout history been unanimous in their witness to the serene sense of happiness and fulfillment to be found in obedience to God's will. For the Jew interested in reclaiming the heritage of his faith, knowledge of Torah laws is indispensable. There can be no better place for the

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novice, not as yet capable of studying the actual sources of Jewish law, to begin than by availing himself of the *Abridged Code of Jewish Law*, which has been so often referred to in these pages. In it, one can find almost every law pertaining to Jewish life at the present time. I can readily testify to the fact that Jews on the "road back" invariably find this *Abridged Code* to be one of their first additions to their Torah libraries. The chapter divisions in this useful work are logical, as they follow the sequence of daily, Sabbath and festival life from dawn to dusk in helpful progression. It is available either in one-volume or four-volume editions, with or without the accompanying Hebrew text. However, all the editions published by the Hebrew Publishing Company contain the same text despite their differing formats. It is vital for the observant Jew to observe *all* the laws which his faith instructs him to. As Rabbi Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, has said:

There are those precepts that the Torah itself designates as "vital" and "essential" and others that receive a classification of much lesser importance. But we must bear in mind that the "simplest" of *mitzvot* is vital to the overall system of Torah—and it must therefore be performed with the same sense of utter self-sacrifice, with the same feeling of "it must be *just so*—*it cannot* be otherwise"...the...most "insignificant" Torah custom should be performed with the same zeal, energy and devotion with which we perform a "major" *mitzva* of the Torah.⁴¹

A cautionary note, though: there are many practices common amongst observant Jews which are not laws in the binding sense, but customs which have arisen over the years, not directly through the authoritative Torah legislative process. This does not, by any means, reflect on the importance or reliability of these customary observations. For the most part, their origins are to be found, as the popular Jewish expression would have it, in the "heights of holiness." Mystics, saints and scholars have all contributed their share to the rich heritage of Jewish customs. Many of these seemingly trivial rituals are, in reality, based upon profound esoteric

wisdom in total consonance with traditional faith. Other customs are lucid reminders of religious lessons of the utmost importance.

Granted, however, that there may be some spurious elements in this vast heritage of non-obligatory customs, we still can find much to be valued in the observance of even the most mistaken custom. A human being does not function in a totally intellectual or philosophical vein. Every individual is inextricably bound to the cultural, historical and familial milieu in which he finds himself. By observing the customary practices of any people, a person binds himself to the past, present and future of that community. The importance of a given custom to the organic continuity of a group is not based upon the actual factual validity of that custom. We do not have to be well-read in the works of sociologists Emile Durkheim and Max Weber to realize the significance of rite in the historical consciousness and subconsciousness of a folk.⁴²

However, the vast majority of Jewish customs would seem to the neutral observer to fall into the first category heretofore discussed. That is, they are reliable, in the sense that they are based on traditional aspects of the Jewish faith. This by no means makes them equally binding upon Jews everywhere. When examining the *Abridged Code of Jewish Law*, one will find the phrases, "it is customary" or "the general practice is" and words of that sort, which are used quite frequently by the author. There are many factors involved in determining the degree to which a specific Jew is called upon to perform these portions of the "Code." The place of one's birth, the synagogue where one prays, the particular segment of Torah Judaism with which one is associated will all play a part in establishing the relationship of the individual to any Jewish custom. It would be a virtual impossibility to analyze all the diverse ramifications of these and other factors. The soundest policy to be followed is to consult a scholarly authority when one is in doubt concerning an individual practice.

Laws and law books—seemingly endless customs of all sorts—such is the no-holds-barred picture of Torah Judaism. It is a faith which does not permit those who adhere to it to bluff their

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way into God's good graces by high-sounding rhetoric. One is not justified or admitted to a select elite on the basis of faith alone in Judaism. The emotional faith of revivalists, evangelists, Holy Rollers and the like is totally foreign to the spirit of God's Torah. A Jew cannot "talk a good fight." He must, of course, have faith. He must believe in the essential doctrines of the revelation at Sinai. However, mere faith is not enough. The life of the Torah Jew is a rich tapestry woven from the strands of faith, morality, ethics and law. Thus, Judaism appeals to the whole man, not just to one of his component parts. As the Book of Ecclesiastes concludes:

The end of the matter, all having been heard: fear God and keep His commandments; for this is the whole man.

The Torah-observant Jew is not an individual who divorces himself from the reality of creation as a whole and adopts one isolated human virtue as his own. The Torah caters to all the deep and sometimes unfathomable ramifications of the human mystique. It combines the goodness of human zeal, compassion, loyalty, poetry, introspection, self-realization and sense of belonging into one coherent system of beliefs and practices. Being of Divine origin, it is uniquely suited to the complicated circumstances of our lives. At times, however, portions of it may appear puzzling to us. That is certainly not surprising. We are no more capable of understanding the entirety of our existence than we are of fathoming all the wisdom known to man. Our perspective, even in the case of the most advanced scholar, is severely limited. . . . It is only by recourse to the Divinely sanctioned, triplicate source of truth—revelation, tradition and reason—that man can hope to come to grips with the needs and obligations of his earthly sojourn.

One point, previously made, should at this point be re-emphasized. The need for the Jew seeking to reclaim his faith to establish a close proximity to a community of believers cannot be overestimated. *Life Is with People* was the title of a popular sociological study of the great Torah communities of Eastern Europe, and indeed life most certainly is most fully realized to-

gether with one's fellows. The environment of our secular age represents a grave threat to the spiritual existence of the Torah Jew. One of the ways in which this influence can be successfully combatted is by associating with fellow Jews who also remain impervious to the onslaughts of the age. As Rabbi Lamm writes:

...it must be remembered that faith, especially in Judaism, is not entirely and exclusively an individual problem. The covenant was sealed between God and the people of Israel, not just a collection of individual Israelites. Identifying with a community of believers which has a tradition of faith and a history which includes an encounter with the Divine is itself a way of relocating oneself in a relationship of trust in God. Thinking, at least in our society, is the solitary act of a single individual, whereas believing and trusting is reinforced by a participating historical community. One who separates himself from the community thereby surrenders this opportunity to encounter God as one of its members.⁴³

"No man is an island unto himself." The sociologist studies this fact, the anthropologist traces its history and the humanist psychologist demands it. Every human being must associate with his fellowmen. The story is told that Frederick the Great of Prussia once wished to discover the original language of the human race. In order to do so he ordered that twenty babies be taken from a nearby orphanage and raised from infancy on without being spoken to. In this way, he hoped that, as they matured, the children would begin speaking whatever came to them naturally, thereby establishing the natural or original language of mankind. Weeks passed and the babies were fed, washed, diapered and cared for in royal fashion, but they were not spoken to. After several months had elapsed, they all began to die off one after the other. Eventually all the children in the monarch's cruel experiment died. The lesson is obvious: humans need the company of others in order to function. This is true for adults as well as for infants. As Jews, the feeling of mutual faith reciprocated by human beings, more specifically by Torah Jews, is a vital necessity. Valuing the relevance

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of our Sinaitic contract with God, the believing Jew cannot take up residence in the "secular city," where so many *real* "fools"* are reaping their well deserved "harvests."

For the Jew seeking to retrace his way back to the faith for which his ancestors endured so much, it is imperative that he seek out a community of Jews who adhere to the doctrines of their faith, and take part in their endeavors. The Torah tells us that God commanded the Jews in the wilderness to contribute one-half of a shekel to the upkeep of the Sanctuary. One chasidic commentator interpreted the significance of the giving of only half a shekel, as opposed to a whole shekel, by saying that God wished to teach His people that only by uniting themselves with their companions could they present a "whole" contribution, a "complete" contribution to God.⁴⁴

Now, paraphrasing Professor Herberg (see above, p. 14) we can safely comment on what "makes a Jew a Jew" and "keeps him a Jew." A Jew is made into a Jew by his fulfillment of the laws of the document by which the Jewish people were eternally founded, namely the Torah. To the degree that a Jew lives up to the terms of that eternal contract, he is realizing his destiny as a Jew. To the degree that he fails, he remains, of course, a Jew, and thereby bound by the contract in the future, but he does not achieve his life's purpose. As for "keeping him a Jew," the formula is equally simple: to the degree that a Jew keeps the terms of his Jewishness together with his fellows as is required, he "keeps himself a Jew." Any failure to do so endangers his Judaism and threatens it mortally, either with the slow death of assimilation or the sudden extermination of intermarriage.

With eternal love have you loved us, O God our God. You have shown us compassion and abundant love, O our Father

*"How great are Your works, O God, how infinitely profound are your thoughts! A man bare of reason does not understand nor can a fool comprehend this" (*Psalms* 92:6, 7).

and our King; for the sake of our fathers who trusted in You, and whom You did teach the statutes of life, endow our spirits also and teach us. O Father, compassionate Father, who is ever compassionate, have mercy upon us and put it into our hearts to gain insight and understanding, to hear, to learn and to teach, to observe, to do and to fulfill with love all the words of the tradition of Your Torah. Cause our heart to cleave to Your commandments, and unify our spirit to love and to fear Your Name so that we may never have cause to be ashamed.

(Daily Morning Prayer)

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(Daily Morning Prayer)

VI WELCOME BACK!

People have fallen into the foolish habit of speaking of orthodoxy as something heavy, humdrum, and safe. There never was anything so perilous or so exciting as orthodoxy. It was sanity: and to be sane is more dramatic than to be mad... it is easy to be a heretic. It is always easy to let the age have its head; the difficult thing is to keep one's own... It is always simple to fall; there are an infinity of angles at which one falls, only one at which one stands.

G. K. CHESTERTON (1874–1936)

Orthodoxy

I would trade all the delights of all worlds for one drop of Jewishness.

R. YAAKOV YITZCHAK OF PSHYS-CHA
(1765–1813)

*The port well worth the voyage is near
And every wave is charmed.*

RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1803–1882)

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We are obviously living now in a period of transition. The Western world, once the bastion of religious civilization, has, under the influences of the Enlightenment and the subsequent plethora of secular ideologies to which it gave birth, slowly been losing its own justification for existence. The crusading, temporal dogmas which once inspired the soul of Western man appear, so to speak, to be running out of gas. No longer do the peoples of America and Western Europe look forward toward a "brave new world" to be ushered in by spreading the doctrines of secular democracy, progress, technology, etc., to the far reaches of the globe. An alienated moral relativism has descended upon the world (with the exception of the Communists, of course, who, by some demonic power, still manage to believe their myths, and the third world, which remains for the most part in a stage of pre-ideological tribal nationalism). Those portions of mankind, though, who once accepted the historical fact of God's revelation and its system of Divinely instituted laws, appear to be ready to throw in the towel. In the heyday of the Enlightenment they were deprived of a reason for existence.

This is all very sad to observe for, as Bertrand de Juvenal once remarked, it is "far better for men to lose their lives than their reasons for living." Torah Jews especially view the rapid collapse of the once theocentric world around them with sadness and trepidation. On all sides they witness the results of the moral

bankruptcy of secularization as it destroys the faith of Jew and gentile alike. Thus, they fear for the Jewish survival of those co-religionists of theirs who have attached their hopes to the now rapidly declining cure-alls and solutions of secularism. To what will the Jew turn, when he realizes that Communism, Socialism, Labor Unionism and so on may all have faintly echoed the demands of God's humanism as outlined in the Torah, but since they limited their view to one or even several aspects of being, they thereby failed to fulfill their advance billing as total answers to all problems? Where does the Jew who is comfortably situated in suburbia turn, when his children ask him the "whys" of life, which in his rapid pursuit of material gain the "bourgeois Jew" has never had time to examine? Where can the modern Jew turn when "Reform" and "Conservative" Judaism reveal themselves as illogical and unsatisfying, illusory sources of faith? In this twilight period of Western history, can the Jew find the road back?

Hopefully, he can. Hopefully, with determination, courage, faith and, of course, the help of God, the modern Jew can sense the collapse of the secular order under his feet and seek alternatives. Hopefully, again, the Jews will sense that the weird spiritual systems put forth by the "counter-culture" and its contemporary descendants, while offering spiritual inklings of the cure to our modern ailments, are essentially more symptomatic of the sickness itself than viable means of recovery. When confronted with the contemporary choice of value-free relativism, materialist apathy or vague spirituality, it is hoped that the Jew will search elsewhere for ultimate answers. Perhaps he will head for home, the eternal Jewish home of the Torah.

G. K. Chesterton was fond of relating the tale of a young man who set sail from England to visit strange and exotic lands. Due to a navigational miscalculation, he mistakenly turned his ship around and set his course, unknown to him, directly home to his native land. Upon arriving, though, he found virtually every town, every site, every road, every individual he saw, a source of enchantment and fascination. "Isn't this a marvellous land!" he mused, until, at

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long last, he was informed that indeed he was in his old home, England. In fact, he had never been elsewhere.

Like the young man in the story, the modern Jew has left home in search of more inviting neighborhoods. Slowly, imperceptibly to him, though, he is being turned around. He is being turned around by his growing unwillingness to go down with the sinking ship of the post-religious Western world. The question remains, though, whether he will reach home base in time, before he descends into the whirlpool of totally obliterated faith. However, one fact remains clear—that should the modern Jew return home he will find it surprisingly much to his liking.

Contrary to popular conception, he will not find Torah Jews regimented into monolithic cadres of semi-robots. On the contrary, he will find a life vibrant with a sense of general purpose, being pursued along a whole spectrum of divergent paths. On the basics, Torah Jews know of no dissent. God, the written and oral laws, the legitimate traditions of the nation, are believed in by all. The purpose of man—to serve God—is universally acknowledged among those who realize that “God, Torah and the Jews are one.” All Torah Jews strive in their individual lives to live up, however failingly, to the requirements of the Torah. Thus, in the Torah world reality is real, the Torah is true, values have meaning and life has purpose. The Jews thank God daily for this fact as they pray:

Blessed be He, our God, Who created us for His glory and set us apart from those who are in error, and has given us the Torah of truth and implanted life eternal in our midst.¹

However, beyond this God-ordained framework of reference there exist a great number of variant philosophies, life-styles and emphases. The Jew returning to his faith would be surprised at the many shades in which the brilliant light of the Torah is refracted in the minds of Torah leaders and in the practices of the Jewish populace. Torah Jews do not, by any means, remain imprisoned in any sort of intellectual straight-jacket.

On the contrary, it is those bizarre philosophies of this latter

half of the twentieth century that have boxed themselves into a corner from which there is simply no point of return. They have attacked religious values in order to replace them with so-called humanist values, only to find that secular value systems are in the final analysis baseless. As Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn once remarked, there is absolutely nothing in secularism capable of discouraging people from converting the skins of their fellows into lampshades. Finally, secularists arrive at the point when they admit their predicament and are forced to pronounce all values illusory. Indeed, some of them have even carried this business of secularization to its only logical conclusion and have announced all reality to be doubtful, even that of their own existence.

Now in stark contradiction to all this confusion, to all this nihilism, stands the eternal Torah. Using the Torah as a starting point, rational men have worked out all sorts of fascinating systems: fascinating, because they relate to truth. Only truth can be fascinating: illusions tend to be a terrible bore. So, as the Jew approaches the citadel of Torah Judaism, he automatically feels the ground under his feet becoming increasingly firmer. He is nearing the world of reality, of square pegs in square holes, of "two plus two equals four," of clearly defined truth and falsehood, right and wrong. He sees before himself freedom, total intellectual freedom, to wander, to probe and to search, because he knows that his quests have meaning in a world of reality. He is about to embark on the greatest adventure known to man, the celebrated "romance of orthodoxy."

As he views the condition of Torah Jewry, he may well find much that puzzles, annoys or even provokes him to anger. That is to be expected. God allows many diversified elements in his army, understanding the vast differences between men, their minds and temperaments, as only He can. He realizes that Torah Judaism must be broad enough to satisfy the needs of all who "call unto Him." To all those "who call unto Him in truth,"² that is, Let us pause now for a moment to examine Torah Judaism as it exists today, for it is there that the "road back" finally comes to an end.

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The so-called Modern Orthodox represent what we might call the "left wing" of Torah Judaism. As is to be expected with philosophies which place themselves somewhat to the left of center, its more extreme adherents sometimes tread dangerously close to the pale. However, such is always the lot of legitimate reformers. The mainstream of Modern Orthodoxy, moreover, is totally within the framework of traditional Judaism. The deviants are few and far between, and cooler heads usually make short shrift of them.

This more liberal segment of Torah Jewry draws its theoretical basis from two general and many times overlapping modern sources. That is not to say that this approach has no historical roots in earlier eras. On the contrary, these liberals have their "pet period" in medieval Jewish history, to which they can point in order to justify their ideals.

The first source is Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, with whom their reader should, by this time, be somewhat familiar. As a zealous protagonist for Judaism in the exceedingly hostile environment of nineteenth-century Germany, Rabbi Hirsch bequeathed to world Jewry much more than either his polemical or scholarly writings, heretofore quoted, would seem to indicate. He transmitted a workable philosophy for confronting the challenges of an era beset with spiritual pitfalls. Called *Torah im Derech Eretz*, "Torah with the way of the world," it postulated:

... that the Torah must rule over all manifestations of human life. The earth and its fullness were created for man, and the ideal man at his highest potential is ... *Mensch-Yisrael* [Man-Israel]. There exists nothing truly human outside of the scope of the Divine Teaching.

... At all times must the unchanging teaching of the Torah be applied to the everchanging *Derech Eretz*...

What follows is that the Torah scholar should be well informed of the "ways of the earth." The laws of nature and the paths of history should be known to him. He should be well aware of what happens in the world which surrounds him...³

This approach, although rejected by its rightist opponents because of its supposedly innovative nature, actually was put into practice in antiquity by the Jews of Spain during their Golden Age, as the period between the tenth and fifteenth centuries is called. There Jews engaged in all sorts of secular pursuits and they featured many outstanding philosophers, doctors, historians, scientists, poets and mathematicians in their ranks. These worldly interests in no way caused these assiduous Jews to become lax in their spiritual endeavors. (The right may dispute this point.) Many of the great Torah works regarded as basic by Talmudic scholars were composed during this period. Indeed, Rabbi Moses Maimonides, who, though spending the greater part of his life outside of Spain, perhaps best personified the Spanish age of which we speak, achieved an amazing degree of erudition in all facets of human wisdom, both holy and temporal.

The leftists* would further claim that the vigorous exclusion of secular studies from the curriculum of Jewish schools during the East European period of sixteenth-to-twentieth-century Judaism was the result not so much of a coherent philosophy but of cultural influences, such as the virulent anti-Semitism of the general populace, the generally simplistic piety of the Russian Orthodox and Polish Catholic masses, the poor material conditions of the Jews themselves, and many other factors. They would point to the famous exceptions to the no-secular-learning standard, such as the

*It is with extreme trepidation that I apply the terms left and right to the various segments of Torah Jewry. By doing so I will probably alienate all of them equally. Most advocates of the various positions herein outlined either view themselves as the only sort of genuine Judaism around, and their opponents, while in no way heretical, as gravely mistaken; or they consider theirs to be the only sort of Judaism suitable for our era, viewing their counterparts as a vestigial manifestation. Almost all of them would reject my equal-time, equal-representation approach, especially its rightist-leftist phraseology. I hereby apologize to all parties concerned, especially to those who I personally feel are more right than others. As for the terms I employ, they represent no value judgments, and are only used to aid in conceptual understanding.

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renowned Rabbi Elijah of Vilna and Rabbi Yehuda Loeb (*Maharal*) of Prague, as evidence of the fact that practical considerations, as opposed to philosophical qualms, restrained Jews from pursuing secular pursuits. They would admit, of course, that as time went by a definite animosity towards secular studies did arise among the Eastern European leaders. They would attribute this to an over-reaction to the dangers of the Western European Enlightenment. This anti-secularist tendency, which in effect frequently became a total rejection of reason as a vehicle for arriving at truth, relying solely on the twin pillars of faith and tradition, is openly attacked by Rabbi Hirsch in his *Nineteen Letters*:

Other men . . . became . . . enemies . . . of all specifically intellectual and philosophical pursuits in general. . . . No distinction was made between the question "What is stated here?" and "Why is it so stated?" . . . oppression and persecution had robbed Israel of every broad and natural view of the world and of life. . . .⁴

Rabbi Hirsch goes on to interpret the initial successes of the Enlightenment as a natural result of the mechanical, "uncomprehending" Judaism offered by the Eastern European Rabbis. Only by revitalizing Judaism, by returning to its original sources of Bible and Talmud and by studying God's handiwork as revealed in nature, and His guidance as revealed in history, did the re-builder of German Jewry feel that Judaism could become true to itself and viable in the modern age.⁵

As the doctrines of Hirschianism have come down to us, they have been somewhat re-cast by the philosophers of the relatively new *Torah uMadda* school of thought. This "Torah and understanding" school is personified in our own time by the group of Torah scholars who usually relate in some practical, or at least sentimental, way to Yeshiva University in New York City. Drawing their basic inspiration from the same sources as Rabbi Hirsch did (the Spanish period is, of course, their high point in Jewish history), this group is generally regarded by orthodox Hirschians as being

too far to the left. On the whole, though, the Modern Orthodox* differ from the Hirschians not so much in terms of ideology as of practice. The Yeshiva University group seems intent on removing all vestiges of what they consider to be simply Eastern European culture as they seek to postulate a coherent philosophy of Torah. The normative Hirschians, however, usually adopt a more conservative approach to such matters. In addition, the Yeshiva University group members operate generally without an ethnic frame of reference. They have not opted for any synthesis with the surrounding American traditions, while the Hirschians have their spiritual headquarters in the very ethnically aware Washington Heights section of New York City, populated by a German-Jewish group transplanted from Rabbi Hirsch's Germany. This, of course, tends to slow down the liberal tendencies of the mainstream Hirschians, as closely-knit cultures usually do. Another difference to be noted would be the tendency of the Hirschians to pretty much avoid apologetic argumentation, much as Rabbi Hirsch himself did, while the Yeshiva University group engages in much give and take vis-a-vis the critical attacks of secularists.

In addition, the followers of the Hirschian doctrine of *Torah im Derech Eretz*, despite their agreement with the *Torah uMadda* group on the importance of the "secular" disciplines, have through-

*It should be noted that the orthodox Hirschians are uneasy with the title of Modern Orthodox, while the Yeshiva University group usually accepts it. However, for our purposes, the term is employed in the sense that both groups are united in their belief that the world at large has something to offer the Torah Jew, while their rightist opponents condemn all manifestations of this-worldliness, be they scholarly, philosophical, or even cultural. Of course, the more extreme elements of Modern Orthodoxy do at times advocate positions which many mainstream Hirschians would view as dangerously close to the heretical. These differences generally center around the tendency of some Modern Orthodox leaders to attribute certain changes in the Oral Law to social and cultural forces, a view which the Hirschians reject. As a result some segments of Modern Orthodoxy have called for various "reforms" of the Oral Law and have been strongly attacked by Hirschians, centrists, rightists and even other spokesmen of Modern Orthodoxy, for doing so.

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out the years exhibited a more "hard line" commitment to the cause of Torah Judaism. Rabbi Hirsch himself was instrumental in influencing the Torah hierarchy of German Jewry to lobby in the Prussian *Landtag* for permission for Orthodox Jews to withdraw from the "umbrella" Jewish communal organizations which included the heretical "Reform" movement as well. This led in 1876 to the passage of the "Law of Secession" which permitted "any Jew to leave his local congregation for religious reasons." This policy of "separation" has been adhered to by Hirsch's followers and in this regard the Hirschians are far closer to the "centrists" (see below) than to the Modern Orthodox. Of course, the Modern Orthodox justify their participation in "United Synagogue" groups with the argument that by so doing they can influence these organizations in the direction of Torah Judaism. The Hirschians claim that participation with heretical groups on an equal footing implies that there are, in fact, three branches of Judaism, a concept not only farcical but dangerous. By legitimizing "Reform," "Conservative" and so on in the public eye, the Hirschians claim that the Modern Orthodox cause far more harm than good.

In addition, Rabbi Hirsch was always virulently opposed to the Zionist movement. This policy has been followed by his disciples up to the present, which again places the adherents of *Torah im Derech Eretz* in clear opposition to the Modern Orthodox. By so doing the Hirschians have steered clear of the pitfalls which have beset the Modern Orthodox on this highly controversial issue. The Modern Orthodox attachment to Zionism or, as they prefer to describe it, Religious Zionism, has to a certain extent blurred the vision of some of the movement's leaders and large numbers of its rank-and-file. Thus, for example, Religious Zionists tend to erect a halo of "sanctity" around the founders of Zionism and the builders of the State of Israel, such as Theodore Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, David Ben-Gurion and so on, despite the fact that these men virulently fought against the basics of the Jewish faith throughout their lives. Religious Zionists also exhibit a marked tendency to gloss over anti-religious actions of the State of Israel, be they

related to conversion, autopsies, morality in the armed forces or a host of other topics, despite the fact that these actions strike at some of the most fundamental of Torah laws. Our concern at present is not with the legitimacy of the Modern Orthodox position on Zionism itself but merely with the mood which has surrounded, and the results which have followed from, that position. All in all, as a broad conclusion we may say that the disciples of Rabbi Hirsch remain, in many ways, closer to the center of the Torah spectrum.

This liberal wing of Torah Judaism offers much to the estranged Jew seeking to return to his faith. It admits the importance of worldly knowledge; its humanism is broad and extends to all of mankind; its thinkers confront the dangerous currents of our age in a persuasive, intellectual manner; its adherents are westernized as far as language, dress, mannerisms, interests and other cultural factors go, and all this is done while remaining squarely within the walls of Torah doctrine and law.

As to the charge of the rightists that the path of the liberals at times veers close to the abyss, the left would reply with several answers: Firstly, that the total isolation of the right wing is non-historical. With the exception of the Eastern European experience, Jews have never engaged in intellectual and physical self-segregation. Secondly, that isolation, while perhaps beneficial in the short run, can wreak great havoc when its adherents are forced into the almost inevitable portentous, historic collision with the outside world. For example, it was precisely in those intellectually isolated communities of Eastern Europe such as the Galician and Ukrainian provinces that the Enlightenment scored astounding gains. Thirdly, isolation is a relative concept. Even among the pro-isolationists there are vast differences in the actual degree of isolation. As yet, none of the rightists have proposed moving to a South Sea island, although there the isolation factor would be vastly increased. Viewed in such a perspective, the Modern Orthodox are also, to a degree, isolated, in that they generally live in their own communities, attend their own schools, associate with one another, etc.

The question is but of degrees. Communities admit and put forth a range of beliefs. Many believe

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The question is therefore not one of total isolation or the lack of it, but of degrees of isolation. Fourthly, intellectually vibrant communities admittedly produce their share of heretics, but they also put forth a rational and attractive defense of faith which protects many a believer and attracts many an alienated Jew.

In sum, in the eyes of its adherents, the liberal wing of Torah Judaism advocates not a compromise policy or a distortion of traditional faith, but an authentic and vibrant portrayal of Torah Judaism. As Rabbi Norman Lamm, one of its leading thinkers, writes, the Modern Orthodox Jew is the individual

... who will not succumb to the blandishments of the materialistic and hedonistic and agnostic society, and yet refuse[s] the easy comforts of intellectual ghettoization; who believe[s] that the function and the mission of the Jew in the world is to illuminate the darkness; to sanctify the profane; to bring the Jewish mission to the nations... to know what separates the holy from the profane, even when we try to consecrate the secular.⁶

So much for the left, who (although the fact would certainly shock the more conservative groups) far outnumber their more traditionalist counterparts. Their way represents only one of the many paths that can be followed in the fascinating land of the Torah.

Centrist Torah Judaism* is perhaps best represented by the Agudath Israel international organization. Its spiritual leaders are, for the most part, Eastern Europeans of the so-called "old school" or their immediate successors. This group, despite its advocacy of a modified isolationism for its own followers, simultaneously pursues an activist policy of Torah reclamation among the disoriented Jewish masses. These fusionists hope to combine the best of both worlds and they therefore encompass a broad spectrum of opinion. On the one hand, among their élite they include rabbis

*Here again, I employ the term centrist in a somewhat high-handed superficial manner. The more knowledgeable reader is asked to bear with this terminology in order to satisfy the needs of the less astute audience.

of the "hard" right, so to speak, who, for their own individual groups, preach a total rejection of the entire secular world. On the other hand, among their higher echelon they also count rabbinical authorities of a far more moderate stand, who have, to a certain degree, allowed their followers to participate in the secular world and adopt some of its outward cultural manifestations. The basis of unity among these seemingly different individuals is their conviction that Torah Judaism must, in this overwhelmingly man-centered age, present an appealing and mature image, in order to attract those masses of Jews who have strayed from home. Educational programs, intellectual polemics, group activities and similar techniques of modern communication are all vigorously employed. As a result of this policy of involvement, these centrists actively participate in the political system of the Israeli government, in order to influence it to adopt Torah law.

The centrists, on the whole, do not engage in apologetic, philosophical, or scholarly exchanges with the various secular challenges of the day. They generally try to build up an attractive picture of Judaism from within rather than counter outside criticisms.⁷ Although their major English language periodical, *The Jewish Observer*,⁸ does at times publish material of a defensive nature, it is basically representative of the centrist approach of presenting Judaism "without embellishments."

It is hard to speak of a fusionist philosophy, as is usually the case with movements that place greater emphasis on practical gains than on ideological purity. Also, the centrists consist of many divergent groups, whose only common denominator can be said to be a realization of the need for some effort to reach out to alienated world Jewry. However, some general comments, while in no way applicable to all of this group, can be made: (1) They tend to view the secular world as intrinsically worthless. Its scholarship is not valued for any inherent meaning, but simply as additional ammunition to facilitate more respectable reclamation activity. (2) They are a great deal more scrupulous than the rank-and-file Modern Orthodox Jew in their observance of many command-

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to engage in apologetic, philosophy, to meet the various secular challenges and to put up an attractive picture of Judaism outside criticisms.⁷ Al-though the periodical, *The Jewish Observer*, of a defensive nature, it is the first approach of presenting

philosophy, as is usually the case with the emphasis on practical gains. The centrists consist of many denominations and can be said to have a lot to reach out to alienated Jews. In their comments, while in no way to be made: (1) They tend to be worthless. Its scholarship is not so much as simply as additional valuable reclamation activity. More important than the rank-and-file is the presence of many command-

ments. In addition, they will usually adopt the more stringent of opinions offered on unsettled matters of Jewish law. (3) They lose a smaller number of their followers to the various heresies of our age. (4) Their schools produce more Torah sages and more scholarly laymen than do the institutions to their left. (5) They tend to preserve, in varying degrees, many of the outward signs of Eastern Europe. This increases their inner cohesiveness and, for many of them, their affection, warmth, loyalty, etc., to their faith. (6) They show faint interest in the material or spiritual well-being of society in general, except insofar as it stands to influence Jewish interests. (7) They shun any identification with heretical Jewish groups by refusing to participate in overlapping umbrella organizations, where Reformers and their ilk are given tacit recognition — a stance generally not shared by the Modern Orthodox.

Thus we see that for all their lack of clear ideological formulations, the fusionists present a distinct and on the whole extremely successful picture of a segment of Torah Judaism. They can boast of having many of the foremost Torah authorities of our time among those who espouse their general position, and can point with pride to their dedicated and scholarly rank-and-file who have helped to better the material and spiritual condition of Jews everywhere.

For the Jew interested in a Torah mode devoid of any taints of secularism, embodying much of the Eastern European warmth, feeling and devotion which has served to inspire millions of Jewish hearts, while still not rejecting every single development of our age, the fusionist approach presents an answer to his needs. By professing piety, scholarship, and devotion together with a certain degree of westernization, the moderates may, despite their ideological laxity, have found a formula relevant to the alienated Jew. Their way is based upon the soundest of traditional Torah principles and is one of the broader paths traversing the land of orthodoxy.

The right wing of Torah Judaism may at first glance appear a bit strange to the contemporary Jew. Strongly influenced by the

trends of the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment, the modern Jew is somewhat taken aback when he finds a large and vibrant segment of Torah Judaism which rejects without any recourse to compromise all manifestations of the post-1789 world. However, despite their seeming strangeness, the rightists are probably the most successful of Torah Jews. These rightists are usually identified with the followers of the doctrines of the eighteenth-century movement of religious insight and revival, believed by its followers to be of singularly Divine origin, known as Chasidim. However, such a generalization is vastly oversimplified. There are many groups, in no way influenced by the teachings of Chasidism, who have equally adopted the conservative stance in their own way,⁹ just as there are some chasidic groups which pursue a somewhat more moderate policy.¹⁰

The rightists, as opposed to the centrists, follow a philosophy of logical rigor. They find absolutely nothing of value in secular culture, and attempt to the best of their ability to keep their masses totally insulated from its influence. To the surprise of the leftists, this isolation policy has worked exceedingly well throughout the world, even in the supposed "melting pot" of America. In order to preserve the fundamentals of the Torah faith, these determined and pious people refuse to surrender any of the outward manifestations of an Eastern European culture which embodied in its rich and varied patterns many nuances of language, habit, dress, mannerisms, music, diet and social structure. These traditionalists maintain this structure *en masse*, usually consciously, at times from force of habit. Any change, any shift, however slight it may seem, is viewed as the proverbial leak in the dam, which, while initially perhaps only a trickle, will eventually develop into a flood.

Practical experience and sociological insight both give credence to this view. When a thought or philosophy is abhorred, the natural human reaction is to feel animosity to its every manifestation. I recall my grandmother telling me of the cultural ostracism which neighbors of hers in Brooklyn were subjected to during the First

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World War, for the simple reason that they owned a dachshund, a German breed of dog.*

This reaction is, of course, not philosophically valid in any ultimate sense, but it seems to be part and parcel of the human condition. By rejecting all outward signs of the secular age, the rightists vividly demonstrate their total hatred of its frightening doctrines. All this may not be precisely the right cup of tea for the modern Jew. However, the modern Jew should bear in mind that his own conception of God is so hazy, his realization that God's will is of serious consequence so murky, that he must seriously entertain the possibility that his own lack of vivid feelings on such matters is very much the result of his own cultural conditioning. Ideas do indeed have consequences—at times, very severe consequences. For Americans in particular the thought that differences of opinion can be of life-and-death importance is somewhat foreign. We are used to having our leaders disagreeing in our public forums on such monumental issues as National Health Insurance and budgetary reform. We witness disagreements on few basics. In a country such as Spain, though, for example, where atheistic anarchists, Roman Catholic Royalists of the Christianist line, Falangists, Communists, Socialists, Roman Catholic Royalists of the Carlist line, super-theocratic Integrists and pluralistic Democrats all oppose one another, the level of discourse has a far more strident sound to it, as the issues involved are so basic. The Jewish rightists are fully cognizant of the strict lines of separation which divide the domains of faith from those of heresy. They want no compromises, no hybrids, but just God's truth, unadulterated.

In addition, the rightists attach a certain aura of holiness, a certain semblance of errorlessness, to the leaders and customs of the Jewish people. This position has support in many Jewish sources, particularly those associated with mysticism and its

*Or is it? . . . In any event, it had a German name, and that was enough to excite the emotions of the patriotic.

students.* Its advocates have included the greatest saints, scholars, and holy men of all time. "Are we to suppose that God allows his people to waste their time on meaningless practices?" they ask. It is this mode of thinking which makes each and every custom associated with the faith of the Jewish people of such grave significance to the rightists — a significance which is only magnified when one considers that its practical results include successful group preservation.

The rightists have many characteristics which set them apart as a distinct grouping of Torah Jews. Among them: (1) the extremely exact fulfillment of all Jewish laws, usually following the most stringent authorities available on any given subject; (2) a deep degree of religious humility and self-introspection, particularly among those groups directly influenced by chasidic teachings;** (3) a sense of total comradeship with their fellows, resulting in a totally voluntary system of almost cradle-to-grave all-inclusive social welfarism;*** (4) a deep degree of reliance upon the dicta of their leaders; again, more pronounced among chasidim;*** (5) a varied system of celebrations of traditional festivals, of great religious and emotional value; (6) a total acceptance of the entire Torah literature, up to the present, without recourse to historical examination, cultural factors and the like;*** (7) a historically non-aggressive, non-proselytizing policy as regards alienated Jews. (8) The tendency to be satisfied with one's lot, materially speaking, although certainly not found among the majority of rightists,*** is surprisingly and refreshingly common.

So much for the conservatives. For the modern Jew, they probably present much to be deeply admired and much to be puzzled at. Unfortunately for the contemporary Jew, the right is a package

*It should be pointed out that the centrists also accept this somewhat vaguely articulated position as essentially true. However, they talk about it far less than the rightists, who give it much greater emphasis.

**These characteristics are to be found among some centrists also, but they are common to the right as a whole.

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deal. Their admirable traits are the direct result of those very beliefs and practices which may be hard for the modernist to swallow. For him, the right represents a long-lost world. Indeed, as its adherents would be the first to proclaim, it quite certainly does. It represents a world unwilling to subject itself to the dangers of a civilization in rebellion against its God. It represents a world where to serve God is to fulfill the *raison d'être* of the universe's very existence, where the saints who render unto God so assiduously that which is justly His are a venerated élite.

In sum, it represents a world perspective and a life style profoundly strange to twentieth-century man. As such, at first glance it would appear to be the least attractive of roads crossing the breadth of the land of Orthodoxy. However, upon closer examination we find this simply not to be the case. As a statement of empirical fact, we can say that the rightists entice just as many, if not more, estranged Jews into their ranks as do other segments of Torah Judaism. This seemingly surprising statistic can be readily explained. Traditionalism has a deep-rooted attraction for the modern Jew, whose barren, secular life is so devoid of doctrine, law and ritual. It awakens in him the feelings of his innermost Jewish soul, and speaks to him in a combined language of universal beliefs and cultural allegiances. The soul of the modern Jew, parched by the arid climate of a bankrupt secularism, casts about desperately to find both reason and rhyme to life. As a substitute for faith, the Jewish soul has mistakenly sought solace in the worlds of zen and orthodox Buddhism, yoga, tarot cards, I-Ching, yippie-ism, witchcraft, astrology, Mexican sorcery, neo-Blakeianism, the Edgar Cayce cult, and a host of other mystical creeds. Each of these systems satisfies, to a certain degree, the natural human yearning for things spiritual. However, unfortunately for their adherents, they satisfy little else. They present neither organized doctrines, moral systems nor coherent frameworks of social structure. It is not surprising, then, that we witness Jews by the thousands turning to the right, traditional, wing of Torah Judaism. It is there that solid doctrine and mysticism combine, that revelation

and self-expression are united, that morality and esoteric disciplines converge, that orthodoxy and mystery meet.

Our picture of Torah Judaism in this last quarter of the twentieth century is now complete. Crippled to a vast degree by the over-simplification which the scope of this work dictates, it nevertheless presents a broad view of the diversified forces alive today in the Torah camp. Clearly, we have now demonstrated the point made at the beginning of this chapter, that Torah Jews are not the intellectual equivalent of Mao's brainwashed Red Guard. They are, as the Bible says, "a stiff-necked people." Disagreements and original thought abound, all based on the firm foundation of reality, underwritten by metaphysical truth.

I have attempted to remain a neutral bystander during the foregoing descriptions. My concern has not been with the right or wrong of any of the positions outlined, but simply with giving the reader a bird's-eye view of where the "road back" finally ends. For indeed, it is here, in the citadel of divergent Torah beliefs, that our journey must come to a conclusion.

Briefly, then, to retrace our steps along the road, we have described the sense of purposelessness which the modern Jew feels in his life; we have traced this purposelessness to the lack of a religious orientation in society in general; we have found the origins of this situation in the eighteenth century Enlightenment and the resultant German "Reform" movement; we have offered a critique of the dogmas of heresy and presented the case for Torah Judaism; we have examined some of the *mitzvot* of the Torah in depth and shown the reader the day-to-day implications of Torah observance; finally, we have described the situation of Torah Judaism in our day.

The task is now completed. The alternatives are clearly spelled out. The modern Jew can either go down with the sinking ship of the age of secularism, or he can return home. He can continue to believe in the discredited dogmas of worn-out God-less humanisms. He can sink into the apathy of Super Bowl Sundays, viewed from

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the comforts of suburbia. He can opt for the bizarre mysteries of oriental creeds. He can resign himself to the torment of secular existentialism. He can pursue any one of these paths, and a host of others. The winds of conformity blow strong in our age; it requires a resolute man to march against them. The path back to his Father's house is by no means an easily trodden one for the Jew. The choice is difficult. Indeed, truth and goodness were never easily chosen and pursued. God Himself speaking to the "Children of Israel" in the wilderness points out those very options in vivid terms:

Behold, I have set before you this day a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you shall hearken to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: and the curse, if you shall not hearken to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods which you have not known.¹¹

For too long now, the Jewish people have gone after strange gods: the gods of Voltaire, Diderot, Saint-Simon and Condorcet; the gods of Mendelssohn, Geiger and Zunz; the gods of Paine, Jefferson and Mill; the gods of Marx, Trotsky and Lenin; the gods of Freud, Jung and Adler; the gods of Sartre, Camus and Heidegger; the gods of Rubin, Hoffman and Dylan, and hundreds of others. The curses have accordingly come: the curses of anxiety and depression, of emptiness and meaninglessness, of apathy and alienation.

As a child, thousands of years ago, Abraham the patriarch shocked the village elders, the "intellectuals" of the city of Ur in the land of the Chaldees, when he proclaimed his belief in one invisible God. As a reward, God promised him:

And I will establish My covenant between Myself and you, and your seed after you, throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God to you and to your seed after you.¹²

In return, God only asked:

And as for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your seed after you, throughout their generations . . .¹³

The covenant was indeed kept throughout the centuries. In the depths of the Egyptian slave-state, it was kept. In the turmoil of the Babylonian captivity, it was kept. In the terror of Syrian persecution, it was kept. In the hell of Roman exile, it was kept. In the agony of the Inquisition years in Spain, it was kept. In the genocidal mania of the Crusades, it was kept. In the face of horrid death at the hands of Chmielnicki and his Cossack hordes, it was kept. In the police-state barbarism of the Communists, it is still kept. The Jewish people have God's promise that it will *always be kept*:

... this My covenant shall remain their very being: My spirit which rests upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth nor from the mouths of your children, nor from the mouths of your children's children, said God, from now to all eternity.¹⁴

A *remnant* will always keep the covenant. For the majority of Jews, however, the covenant has been broken. Where the machination of Torquemada, Alexander III, Beria, and Goebbels failed, the pressures of modernity have succeeded. The pressure of middle-class peer-group forces have broken the covenant which has been maintained for four thousand years. The glorious chain of faith has been cut.

So, at this moment in history, the lines have been clearly drawn. There is no comfortable middle ground, where the modern Jew can bury his head, ostrich-like, in the sand, and ignore the central issue of his life. Will he listen to the voice of his Jewish soul and the wise counsel of his reason? Will he entrust himself to the hands of demonic secularism, or to a Merciful God?

Before the Holy Days, Jews the world over pray to God:

When a son commits a sin, his father strikes him; but a compassionate father heals his [son's] wounds. When a slave is rebellious, he is put in chains; but a master, if he so desires,

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breaks the chains. We are Your firstborn children, and we
have sinned against You; our soul is filled with bitter afflic-
tion. We are Your servants and we rebelled against You. We
entreat You: in Your abundant mercy, heal our overwhelm-
ing pain, that we do not perish wholly in exile.¹⁵

The decision to turn back belongs in the final analysis to the
individual Jew. God has entrusted the choice to each Jewish soul.
He ever sits awaiting the decision. Will it be "the road back"?

*And God spoke unto Moses at Mount Sinai saying: ... And yet...
when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them,
neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly and to break My
covenant with them, but I will for their sakes remember the cove-
nant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of
Egypt, that I should be their God; I am the Lord (Leviticus 25:1,
26:44, 45).*

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8. R. Bachya ibn Pakuda, *Duties of the Heart* (*op. cit.*), pp. 124-181.
9. A. Cressey Morrison, "Seven Reasons Why a Scientist Believes in God," *Reader's Digest*, October 1960, pp. 72, 74.
10. W.H. Matttram, "Scientific Basis for a Belief in God," *The Listener*, April 22, 1948, 662-663.
11. Rabbi Avigdor Miller, *Rejoice, O Youth*, New York: Balshon Printing, 1962, p. 93.
12. Quoted in E. Merrill Root, *America's Steadfast Dream*, Western Island, Belmont, 1971, p. 150.
13. Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, Louisiana State University Press, 1969, p. ix.
14. Dr. Benjamin E. Mays, "Why I Believe there is a God," *Ebony*, December 1961, p. 134.
15. See Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1958.
16. John D. Sheridan, *The Hungry Sheep*, New Rochelle: Arlington House, 1973, pp. 129-130.
17. Rabbi Elazar Azikari, *Yedid Nefesh*, hymn chanted at the third Sabbath meal.

18. Peter Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1964, p. 81.
19. Daily Morning Prayers.
20. C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, Macmillan Co., paperback edition, 1972, pp. 21-22.
21. Psalms 19:10.
22. Charles Hartshorne, *Anselm's Discovery*, La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 1965.
23. Jonathan Barnes, *The Ontological Argument*, London, 1972. Of special interest is Norman Malcolm's article, "Anselm's Ontological Arguments," *Philosophical Review*, January 1960.
24. See Miller, *Rejoice* etc. (*op. cit.*), pp. 58-61.
25. See Rabbi Eli J. Gottlieb, *The Inescapable Truth*, New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1971, pp. 125-128.
26. R. Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Torah Fundamentals, 8:3.
27. Daily Morning Prayers.
28. Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Princeton University Press, 1944, p. 485.
29. Hosea 14:9-10.

IV / BACK TO WHAT?

1. R. Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of the Basics of Faith 8:1.
2. R. Moses Maimonides, *Principles of Faith*.
3. Rabbi J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and the Haftorahs*, London: Soncino Press, 1961, p. 399.
4. Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis*, Jerusalem 1960; *idem*, *A Commentary to the Book of Genesis* (two volumes), Jerusalem 1961.
5. Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, translated and abridged by Moshe Greenberg; University of Chicago Press, 1960.
6. Max Kapusten, "Biblical Criticism: A Traditionalist View," *Tradition*, 7:4 (Winter 1965) and 8:5 (Spring 1966); combined in *Challenge*, ed. Carmell and Domb (*op. cit.*).
7. Emanuel Feldman, "Changing Patterns in Biblical Criticism," in: *Challenge*, ed. Carmell and Domb (*op. cit.*), p. 432.
8. Louis Rabinowitz, *Torah Min Ha-Shamayim*, *Tradition*, 8:1.
9. Steven Shaw, "Orthodox Reactions to the Challenge of Biblical Criticism," *Tradition*, 10:3 (Spring 1969). Although a bit pessimistic in his conclusions, Shaw presents probably the best short but thorough overview of the various authorities in the field.
10. Elihu A. Schatz, *Proof of the Accuracy of the Bible*, Middle Village: Jonathan David, 1973.

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11. The commentaries have been published in Hebrew by Mossad haRav Kook in Jerusalem.
12. On a scholarly level, see Thomas Molmar, *God and the Knowledge of Reality*, Basic Books, 1975; and Eric Voegelin, *Science, Gnosticism and Politics* (op. cit.).
13. Rabbi J.H. Hertz, *Affirmations of Judaism*, London: Oxford University Press, 1927, p. 54.
14. R. David Hoffman, *Die Erste Mischna*, Berlin, 1882; cited in H. Chaim Schimmel, *The Oral Law*, New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1973, pp. 19-20.
15. Rabbi Yitzchak Isaac ha-Levi, *Doroth ha-Rishonim*, Jerusalem 1967 (Hebrew).
16. Rabbi Avigdor Miller, *Torah Nation*, New York, 1971. The significant chapter for reference purposes is the second.
17. Deuteronomy 17:8-13.
18. *Sefer haChinuch* (*The Book of Education*), Commandment 496.
19. Rabbi Avigdor Miller, *Rejoice O Youth*, New York: Balshon Printing Co., p. 205.
20. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb: A Philosophy of Jewish Laws and Observances*, trans. Dayan Dr. I. Grunfeld; London: Soncino Press, 1962, pp. 382, 383-4.
21. "Reform Judaism," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 14:27.
22. It should be noted in passing here that the Modern Orthodox philosophy differs somewhat from the more conservative Eastern European outlook on this and similar points (see chapter six). The Modern Orthodox, while viewing all decisions of the Torah legislative process as completely binding, do not find it impossible to acknowledge that the process did, at times, err as far as objective truth is concerned. They find this possibility of no real consequence, since God's command was to follow the Torah authorities even in their possibly erroneous opinions. The Eastern European group, on the other hand, regards the final results of the sages' deliberations to have been influenced by the Hand of God and therefore infallible in an objective sense. The overwhelming majority of Torah leaders in the past five centuries have opted, in some form or other, for the latter opinion. Jewish mysticism, which is also viewed as a legitimate part of the Torah tradition by most authoritative sources, would seem to clearly sanction this view. One is tempted to view the Modern Orthodox position here as erroneous. However, there does seem to be some support for this opinion in certain traditional sources.
23. Rabbi Shelomo Danziger, "Modern Orthodoxy or Orthodox Modernism," *Jewish Observer*, October 1966, pp. 3-9; also Rabbi Danziger, "Author's Reply," *Jewish Observer*, December 1966, pp. 16-20.
24. *Pentateuch with Rashi's Commentary*, translated by Rev. M. Rosenbaum and Dr. A.M. Silberman, in collaboration with A. Blashki and L. Joseph, New York: Philipp Feldheim.

25. *The Soncino Chumash*, ed. Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, London: Soncino Press.
26. Rabbi J.H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and the Haftorahs*, London: Soncino Press.
27. The Soncino edition, *op. cit.* These volumes have come under fire by some elements of Torah Jewry for their tendency to draw on the works of non-Jewish authors.
28. To date, the books of Esther, Ruth, Lamentations, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, and Genesis have appeared.
29. *Mishnayoth*, by Philip Blackman, FCS, New York: Judaica Press.
30. Also available from Soncino are an assortment of Talmud tractates with both Hebrew and English texts.
31. Daily Evening Prayers.
32. Deuteronomy 6:6, 7.
33. Psalms 33:15.
34. R. Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Kings, Chapter II, *ad loc.*
35. Isaiah 25:9.

V / HOW TO GET BACK

1. Dennis Prager and Joseph Telushkin, *Eight Questions People Ask about Judaism*, Whitestone: Tze Ulmad Press, 1975, p. 23.
2. Psalms 119.
3. Talmud, Beitza 15a.
4. Rudolf Kittel, cited in Rabbi J.H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, London: Soncino Press, 1961, p. 298.
5. For an examination of the anti-joy philosophy in contrast to Jewish views of the physical, see Rabbi Norman Lamm, *A Hedge of Roses*, New York: Philipp Feldheim, pp. 17-32; and Rabbi Dr. Eliezer Berkovitz, *Crisis and Faith*, New York: Sanhedrin Press, 1976, pp. 48-82.
6. Genesis 1:31.
7. Psalms 100:2.
8. Midrash Rabba, 11:9, see also Maharsha, Bava Kamma 32b.
9. Exodus 20:8.
10. *Ibid.* 31:17.
11. Dayan I. Grunfeld, *The Sabbath*, Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1972, p. 1.
12. Talmud, Beitza 15a.
13. Isaiah 58:13, 14. Another source in English dealing with Sabbath Law is the popular work by Hyman E. Goldin, *The Jewish Woman and Her Home*, New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1941, pp. 115-136. For the advanced student of Sabbath law, there is available a scholarly,

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multi-volume work on the subject by Rabbi Shimon D. Eider of Lakewood, New Jersey (*Halachos of Shabbos*), of which several volumes have already been published in recent years.

14. Leviticus 20:25-26.

15. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb* (*op. cit.*), p. 319.

16. R. Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Forbidden Foods 17:32.

17. Morris Joseph, quoted in Rabbi J.H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch*, etc. (*op. cit.*), p. 449.

18. Further information on this can be had by contacting the National Committee for the Furtherance of Jewish Education, 770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, New York 11213.

19. Also to be noted in this vein are *The Royal Table, An Outline of the Dietary Laws of Israel*, by Rabbi Jacob Cohn, published by Feldheim (*op. cit.*). Special emphasis on the procedures of kosher slaughter is to be found in Shmuel Rubinstein's short but detailed work, *The Book of Kashrus*, published by the author and available from him at 1161 Manor Avenue, Bronx, New York 10472 (illustrated).

20. The area of practical, daily kashruth observance is blessed with many fine booklets and periodicals. Among them are the *Guide* and the *Handbook* published by the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations, 84 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011. In addition there is the excellent periodical *Madrich Hakashrus*, which, although basically in Hebrew and Yiddish, also contains an English section and constantly reports on new discoveries in the world of kashruth. It is available from the Vaad Hakashrus, 4810 16th Ave., Brooklyn, New York 11204. In addition, the Jewish Homemaker, P.O. Box 324, Brooklyn, New York 11204, provides additional important information, completely in English, in this field.

21. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb* (*op. cit.*) p. 331.

22. Exodus 34:6, 7.

23. Daily Morning Prayers.

24. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Horeb* (*op. cit.*) pp. 472-473.

25. Also available in English and offering much to be recommended are the following volumes, all published by Feldheim: *The Hafetz Hayyim on the Siddur*, trans. Charles Wengrov; Menachem Raab, *Understanding the Siddur*; B.S. Jacobson, *The Weekday Siddur*, trans. L. Oschry.

26. *Sefer ha-Chinnuch*, Commandments 421, 422.

27. Morning Prayers.

28. Exodus 13:9 and Deuteronomy 6:8.

29. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Nineteen Letters*, New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1960, p. 83.

30. Pirkey Avoth 5:26.

31. Adapted from the works of Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson (the Lubavitcher Rebbe) by Y.M. Kagan, in *A Thought for the Week*, Oak Park: Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, Detroit Regional Office, Vol. 6, pp. 53-54.

32. Numbers 15:39-41.
33. Commentary of R. Ovadia Seferno to Numbers 15:39.
34. R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, *The Pentateuch*, translated and explained, rendered into English by Isaac Levy; London 1964, Vol. 4, p. 265.
35. The chief of Jewish mysticism.
36. For detailed treatment of the laws of *tefillin* see Shmuel Rubinstein, *The Tefillin Manual*, illustrated (*op. cit.*). For a somewhat more popular exposition on the same subject, see *Tefillin*, published by Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch, 770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn. The classic work on *tefillin* remains *Sign and Glory*, ed. Yechezkel Rittenberg, an anthology of traditional sources that deal with the topic. On *tzitzith* there is an excellent illustrated volume by Rubinstein entitled *The Talis in Jewish Life*. Unfortunately there is no volume on *tzitzith* to compare with *Sign and Glory*.
37. Care should be taken in the purchase of *tefillin* to ensure that they meet the requirements of Jewish law. As there is unfortunately quite a sizeable quantity of totally worthless *tefillin* on the market and *tefillin* do tend to be expensive (not that they are overpriced: it is just that a great deal of expert work must go into their making), it is best to consult a scholarly authority before buying *tefillin*.
38. There are many excellent works available in English on both the details of Jewish marital laws and their rationale. Among them are Zev Schostak, *Taharath ha-Mishpacha, A Guide to Jewish Family Laws*, Feldheim; Rabbi Moshe Max, *The Jewish Concept of Marriage*, Rabbinical Council of America, New York; Rabbi Eliyohu Blay, *Code of Jewish Purity*, anonymously translated from the Hungarian original, Brooklyn, New York; *A Marriage Guide for Jewish Women*, Agudath Israel, New York; Chapter nine of Hyman Goldin, *The Jewish Woman and Her Home*, Hebrew Publishing Company, 1941, pp. 267-307. Of special interest to the Jew previously unfamiliar with his faith would be *Pardes Rimonim* by Rabbi Moses Tendler.
- Dealing specifically with marriage itself there is the short but moving essay by David Stavsky, *Thou Art Consecrated Unto Me*, and the collection of essays by Samuel Rosenblatt, *Under the Nuptial Canopy*, both published by Feldheim.
- For the adolescent Jewish youth interested in a Jewish approach to the moral life, there are *The Jewish Adolescent* by Rabbi Uriel Zimmer, Brooklyn, 1963, and *The Road to Responsible Jewish Adulthood*, by Pinchas Stolper, published by the National Conference of Synagogue Youth, New York, 1967.
39. Pirkey Avoth, conclusion.
40. Morning Prayer for Festivals.
41. *A Thought for the Week* (*op. cit.*) p. 56.
42. I have here adopted a centrist approach to this somewhat touchy topic. On the right side of the spectrum of Torah views, the opinion would be widespread that any custom that has been adopted by a large segment

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 London 1964, Vol. 4, p. 265.

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 be *Pardes Rimmonim* by

is the short but moving
Unto Me, and the collec-
the Nuptial Canopy, both

a Jewish approach to the
 by Rabbi Uriel Zimmer,
Jewish Adulthood, by
 Conference of Synagogue

to this somewhat touchy
 views, the opinion would
 adopted by a large segment

of Jews is completely authoritative. This view would state that God would not allow dubious practices to mislead His people for any length of time. As proof of this view, they would adduce the testimony of many saintly men throughout the centuries, some of whom exhibited surprising extra-worldly powers and abilities, who have all supported this view. Leftists may criticize this view, and have been strongly attacked by the others for so doing.

I have, throughout this work, attempted to provide a synthesis of all Torah viewpoints. To present a picture of Torah Judaism in only one of its manifestations would present an unbalanced, distorted view of the actual condition of Jewish belief at the present time.

43. Rabbi Norman Lamm, *Faith and Doubt*, New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1971, pp. 29-30.

44. Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polnoye, Russia, in *Toldoth Ya'akov Yosef*, *Sidra Ki Thissa*.

VI / WELCOME BACK

1. Daily Morning Prayers.

2. Psalms 145:18.

3. Rav Shimon Schwab, *These and Those*, Feldheim, 1966, pp. 13, 14. This short essay (forty-seven pages in all) is a fascinating presentation, in debate form, of the *Torah im Derech Eretz* arguments as opposed to those of the more rightist factions. The author, a Torah scholar of renown, is in an excellent position to present both sides of the coin, as he has had close association with both groups throughout his lifetime. "These and those are both the words of the Living God" is a statement of the Talmud in *Eiruvim*, in reference to a disagreement between the schools of Hillel and Shammai. It summarizes Rav Schwab's conclusions, that both schools of thought are legitimate expressions of Torah Judaism.

4. Rabbi S.R. Hirsch, *The Nineteen Letters*, Feldheim, 1960, p. 121.

5. It is passages of this sort by Rabbi S.R. Hirsch which make it well-nigh impossible (well, for me at least) to accept the interpretation of Hirschianism offered by some Eastern European Rabbis, that the founder of the *Realschule* was only advocating a pragmatic solution to the specific problems of German Jewry, not a lasting philosophy. I have found that view hard to swallow for anyone even remotely familiar with the *Nineteen Letters* or *Horeb*. We would have to assume that Rabbi Hirsch had thoroughly hidden his true intentions from everyone's eyes if we were to accept the Eastern European theory.

6. Rabbi Norman Lamm, *The Royal Reach*, New York: Philipp Feldheim, 1970, pp. 52, 53.

7. It is for this reason (as well as those already discussed) that many

neo-Hirschians would be far more comfortable with a centrist as opposed to a leftist label.

8. The Jewish Observer is available from 5 Beekman Street, New York, New York. It is attuned to the thinking Jew and presents the best of the centrist position. The leading periodical of the Modern Orthodox is a scholarly journal entitled *Tradition*. It is geared to the intellectual, knowledgeable Jew, familiar with the secular disciplines. It is available from its publisher, The Rabbinical Council of America, Suite 900, 220 Park Avenue South, New York 10003.

9. Consider the Brisker Talmudists and the devotees of the Chazon Ish in Israel.

10. Consider the activities of the Lubavitcher group in America or the followers of the Gerer Rebbe in Israel.

11. Deuteronomy 11:26-29.

12. Genesis 17:7.

13. Genesis 17:9.

14. Morning Prayers.

15. Penitential Prayers.

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APPENDIX

Some of the new yeshivoth (Torah schools) for beginners
(listed alphabetically)

KEY

M: Men W: Women
M/W: Separate divisions for
men and women
E: English H: Hebrew
F: French R: Russian

AISH HaTORAH
Rechov Chayei Olam
P.O.B. 14149
Jewish Quarter, the Old City
Jerusalem, Israel
M E

Also:
12517 Hatteras Street
N. Hollywood
California 91607
(Rabbi Zvi Block)

DVAR YERUSHALAYIM / THE
JERUSALEM ACADEMY OF
JEWISH STUDIES
Rechov HaYeshiva 8, Geulah
P.O.B. 5454
M/W EHFR

Also:
574 East 9th Street
Brooklyn, New York 11218
(Rabbi Mordechai Potash)

Also:
JERUSALEM ACADEMY
STUDY GROUPS
3 Park Street

Salford 7, Lancs.
Manchester, England
(Dr. Rodney Wilkins)

HAMIVTAR
Rechov Polansky 14
(Bet Yosef Navoradok)
Jerusalem, Israel
M/W EH

HAR ZION /
DIASPORA YESHIVA
Har Zion
P.O.B. 6426
Jerusalem, Israel
M/W EH

KFAR CHABAD
Kfar Chabad, Israel
M E

MAGEN AVRAHAM
Rechov Chafetz Chaim 8
Bnei Brak, Israel
M E

MIKDASH MELECH
1326 Ocean Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11230

THE NEW ENGLAND
CHASSIDIC CENTER
1710 Beacon Street
Brookline, Massachusetts

N'VEI YERUSHALAYIM
Rechov Cassuto 5
Bayit Vegan
Jerusalem, Israel
W EHF

APPENDIX I (cont.)

OHR SOMAYACH
Rech. Shimon HaTzaddik 18
P.O.B. 18103
Jerusalem, Israel
M/W EH

Also:
325 Park Hill Avenue
Yonkers, New York
(Mr. G. Shapira)

SHAPPELL'S / COLLEGE OF
JEWISH STUDIES
S'derot Ha'Meiri 2
Kiryat Moshe
Jerusalem, Israel
M E

Also:
1239 East 8th Street
Brooklyn, New York

RABBINICAL SEMINARY
OF AMERICA
(Preparatory Program)
92-15 69th Avenue
Forest Hills, New York 11375
(Rabbi Mines)

THE KOLLEL
(Beginners Program)
48 Urania Street
Observatory, Johannesburg
South Africa

TAL TORAH
c/o Rechov HaRav Frank 29
Bayit Vegan
Jerusalem, Israel
(Rabbi A. Rottman)
M E

SH'OR YOSHUV YESHIVA
1526 Central Avenue
Far Rockaway, NY 11691
M E

YESHIVAT TOMCHE TMIMIM
(Lubavitch-Chabad)
226 Sussex Avenue
Morristown, NJ 07960
M E

Also contact:
MERKOS L'INYONEI CHINUCH
770 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11213

HADAR HATORAH
824 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11213
W E

MACHON CHANA
733 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, New York 11213
W E

BAIS CHANA FOR GIRLS
15 Montcalm Court
St. Paul, Minnesota 55116
W E

(Reprinted from Shimon Hurwitz, *Being Jewish*; Jerusalem-New York:
Feldheim Publishing, 1978; by kind permission of the author)

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Diderot, Denis
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TORAH

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Vegan

Jerusalem, Israel

Abraham A. Rottman)

YOSHUV YESHIVA

Central Avenue

Rockaway, NY 11691

IVAT TOMCHE TMIMIM

(Chabad)

Essex Avenue

Stonington, NJ 07960

Contact:

Shalom L'INYONEI CHINUCH

Eastern Parkway

Brooklyn, New York 11213

HaTORAH

Eastern Parkway

Brooklyn, New York 11213

IN CHANA

Eastern Parkway

Brooklyn, New York 11213

CHANA FOR GIRLS

Central Court

St. Paul, Minnesota 55116

Jerusalem-New York:

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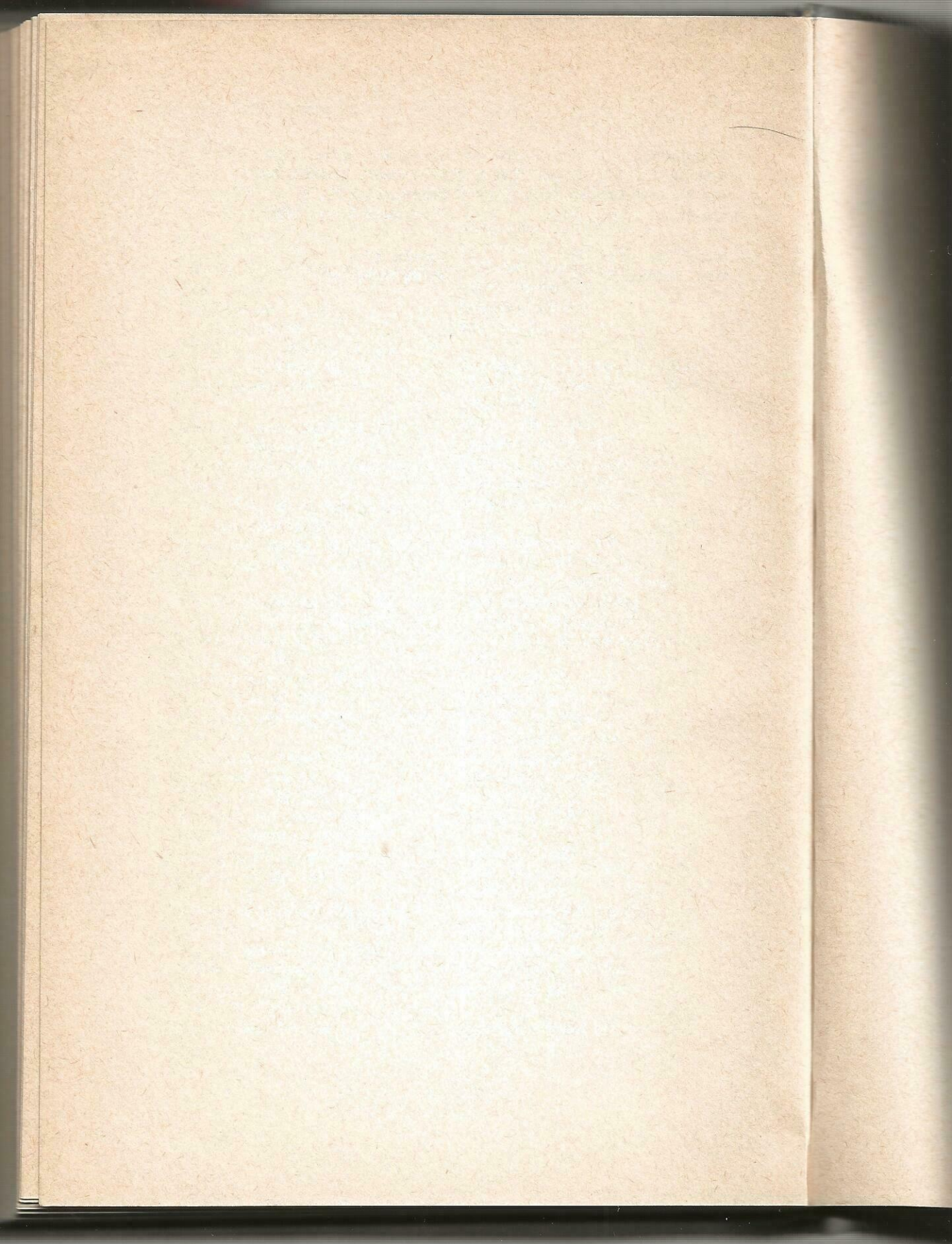
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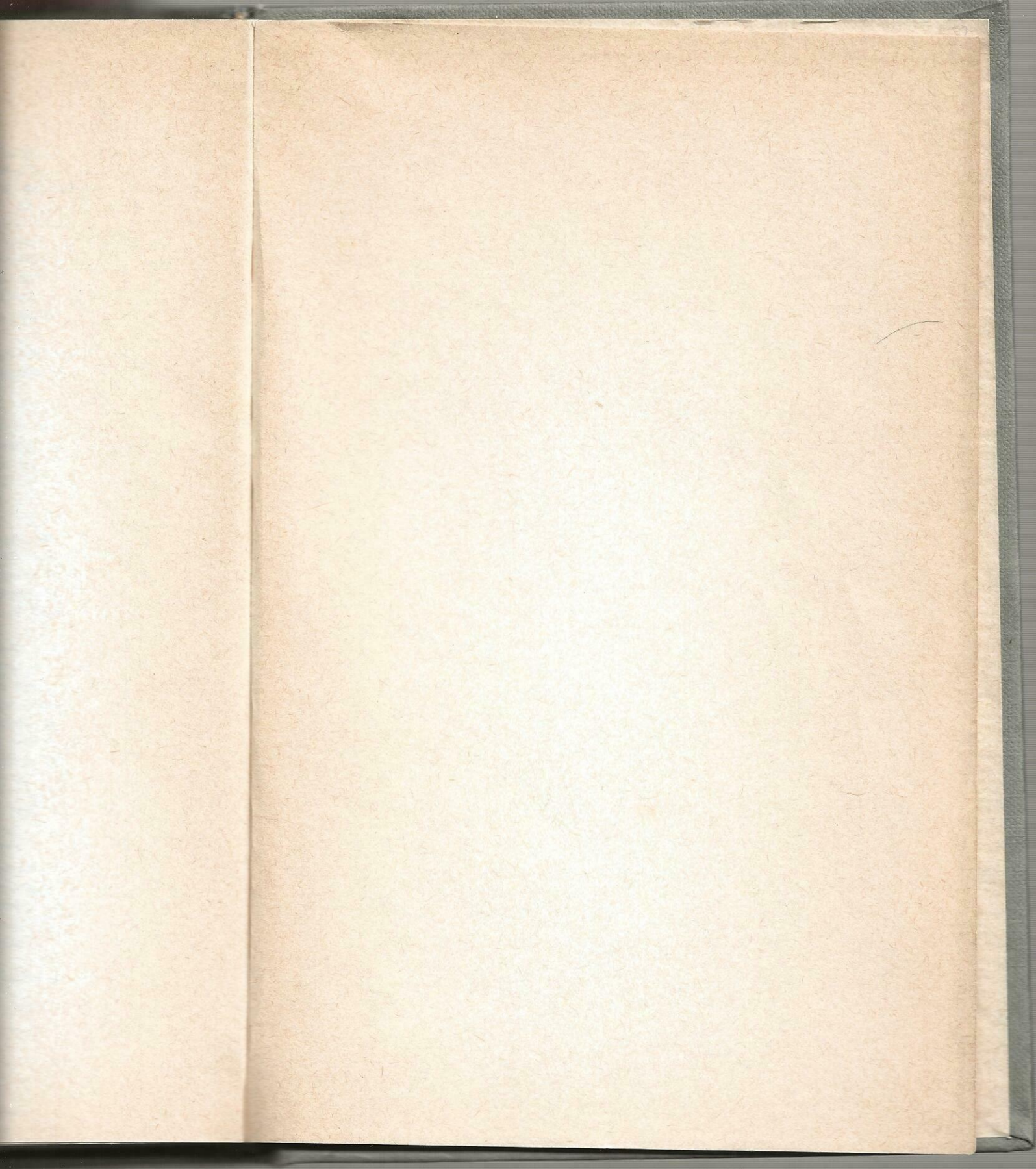
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side of the picture. The author goes on to present numerous reasons and proofs for the essential truthfulness and validity of Torah Judaism. Then there is an introduction to the fundamentals of the Jewish faith. The volume closes with a description of certain key *mitzvot*, and an objective overview of how observant Jews actually live in 20th-century America.

All in all, this is a book that has long been overdue on the American scene. It fills a vital need, providing valuable food for thought for both the religious and the non-religious Jew.

The author

Mayer Schiller has been described as a "tall, youthful-looking 25-year-old man" ~~who~~ dressed in full chasidic regalia, who, to the amazement of those who hear him lecture, has no academic degrees in history and philosophy but is simply (by his own admission) a "high-school dropout."

Born in Brooklyn to a non-religious family, he began observing *mitzvot* on his own at about the age of 12. After public school he entered a yeshiva high school, and then a chasidic *kolel*. This self-taught young man now teaches in the Yeshiva High School of Queens; another book of his, on political philosophy (unrelated to Jewish themes) is scheduled for publication shortly. *This* volume, however, is one in which he has invested not only his mind, but his heart and soul as well.

*(from the Introduction by Prof. Norman Lamm,
President, Yeshiva University)*

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