

## REFLECTIONS ON JEWISH FAITH IN A SECULAR WORLD

by *DAVID HARTMAN*

In memory of Dr. Yechezkel Hartman

Hands off: neither the whole of truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer, although each observer gives a partial superiority of insight from the peculiar position in which he stands . . . It is enough to ask of each of us that he should be faithful to his own opportunities and make the most of his own blessings, without presuming to regulate the rest of the vast field.

William James.

Much discussed is the impact of secularization upon traditional values. But rather than attempt to offer a sweeping overview of how religious man copes with that issue, I am going to speak more simply out of my own tradition. It is characteristic of my own philosophic outlook to doubt the existence of such a thing as generalized religious man. Men must speak out of their own memories, roots, and experiences, and must witness to that from which they come. My personal history and my thoughts certainly do not constitute the whole field. Influenced by William James in this regard, my sensibilities are pluralistic and particularistic. What is said in the tradition from which I speak need not be significant to those who are outside it.

Indeed, it often seems that relevance outside a man's tradition is a gift which those who are without might confer, but it is not something at which he himself must aim. A man thinks dangerously, even arrogantly, if he intends to explain that which is beyond his experience. The philosopher speaking from a particular focus clarifies that which is within his survey, and he is only grateful if that which has meaning in his world speaks to those who do not participate in it. The argument

---

\* Based on lectures delivered at the meeting of the Liaison and Planning Committee of the World Council of Churches and the International Jewish Council for Interreligious Consultations, held in Jerusalem on 27 February 1976; at the opening session of the Jerusalem Conference of the International Council of Christians and Jews, 21 June 1976; and during a seminar of Dutch and Belgian theologians on the theme "Tradition and Secularization", 11 January 1977. The research on this article was made possible by a grant received from the Board of the Shalom Hartman Institute, Montreal.

Dr. David Hartman is a senior lecturer of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Director of the Shalom Hartman Institute, Jerusalem.

will reflect a Jew proud to live in the midst of a moving drama, an actuality called the Jewish Return, which is in fact Judaism's return to secularity. The attempt to cope with secularization lies at the heart of contemporary Israel's challenge to traditional Judaism.

The presentation will be divided into three parts:

The first part will indicate ways in which many people within the Jewish community, or possibly others outside it, deal with secularization, and the role religion plays in a world which appears to be indifferent to the presence of God. I shall suggest various responses, and also my disagreement with those responses. The second portion will introduce a possible halakhic approach to the modern dilemmas of secularization. The third section will consider something of the impact of the Jewish people's decision to return to their land.

## RESPONSES TO SECULARIZATION

One of the profound dimensions of modernity is loss of the sense of history. Modernity manifests what I call "the discontinuous consciousness." This subjective atomism reveals not only irreverence or lack of rootedness in the past, but it expresses itself also in a feeling that the present moment that I am engaged in, the instant I live in, does not open to any reality outside itself. The present is locked into itself; it is self-justifying, without containing in any way the demands of the past, or a notion of realization of a dream, or ties to a process beyond itself. It is the triumph of total immanence without any sense of transcendence in the expression of time. One can allege that technological consciousness neutralizes the past, makes it unnecessary. A mark of the self-reliant activism of man's inventive qualities, which has been part of secularization, is that an individual who builds his life around loyalty to the past typically feels ignored and abandoned.

### *Escape*

Thus one product of secularization has been the *triumphant man* who finds attachment to the past unnecessary because he imagines that the solutions to his problems lie within himself. But another offspring of modernity has been the tragic man who experiences the near total failures of revolutionary dreams. Activists now find it difficult to inspire faith in some radical scheme which will rebuild the world in a new image, in view of the repeated disaster of massive causes, such as Marxism and third world movements. To be sure, many of us still can cling to the hope of some new apocalyptic, historical revolutionary impetus. But to do so, we have to be blind, or we have to prefer in some way not learn from what has gone before, and to imagine accordingly that men can dissolve the problems of humanity.

As a result of profound disillusionment, even in the new secular messianisms, one does not have a future that he can really believe in. Technology has eliminated the

past, the failure of secular revolutions has aborted the future, and therefore men are caught in a present instant in which they can choose various responses: one can lose himself in a hedonistic moment. (It's later than you think; therefore enjoy yourself now, because tragedy is the ultimate meaning of life and men have only this moment.) Or one can leap into "the religious response," into an eastern mysticism of the sort described by R.C. Zaehner, which offers not hedonism but instead proposes to reveal eternity in the present moment. An attraction to this sort of mysticism is one response to the loss of history. If this reaction were to be received as a final statement of the course to be taken by religious man, then humanity would have lost the Hebrew tradition. The burden of the biblical tradition is to be in history; and I shall indicate in parts II and III what that means.

In a book by John Hick, *Truth and Dialogue: The Relationship between World Religions*, R.C. Zaehner writes,

The God of the Old Testament is what Aurobindo calls a "bully and a tyrant" and his only excuse is that "he justifies himself in the end." The West has to all intents and purposes finished with him. The only valid defense of him is that he had to be represented in these terms to a primitive and savage people. He had to be humanized in the Wisdom books (most of which were rejected by the Jews and Protestants) and again in the Talmud. For the ancient Hebrews, he was no doubt an overwhelming and inescapable "truth;" but since Judaism is essentially a religion that works itself out in time, it is a truth that cannot but supersede itself . . . (it is religiously speaking, a relative truth.

In other words, Judaism's attachment to history, by its very definition, means its own self-destruction; it is dialectical in the Hegelian sense, and is but a negation.

The Western interest in eastern religions is very largely a revulsion against this type of deity (the deity of the Old Testament, the deity who is very involved in human affairs), what Protestants call the God of History. For if history – and religious history in particular – teaches anything, it is that every single ideal, whether religious or secular, that man has ever had, is sooner or later utterly corrupted. We seem to be imprisoned in a cycle of *yin* and *yang* . . . The only answer for the individual, then is to find eternity within himself. Hence it is Hinduism and Buddhism . . . that have attracted post-Christian man . . .

Therefore one religious response to the apparent frustration of God's dreams for man, to the recurring defeat of human attempts to establish God's kingdom on earth, to the persistent ill-success in building a living community that reflects in the totality of its life passion of spirit and consciousness of commitment – to these failures of history and community – is the quest for a religion of the private self where one abandons both community and its history. What is offered in place is a religious life which does not have to be anchored in the concrete structures of social reality. Here in the private and inward self is found a refuge not fortified on the foundation of a given history: religion can offer meaning for modern man by proposing a way of discovering a permanent sense of fulfillment which need not be translated into the mechanisms of the market places of civilization. This promulgated haven, this personal meaning is said to be a way of retaining integrity irres-

pective of the fact that it cannot be embodied or concretized within the framework of the collective existence of the polis.<sup>1</sup>

### *Retreat*

Another response of eternity within the self is indeed an attempt to build some sense of community, but in a 'sect' dimension (using the understanding of 'sect' that is suggested by A.C. MacIntyre).<sup>2</sup> His thesis is that the industrialization of modern man and the whole technological process have inaugurated a new reality. The explanation both of the secularization of English society (for example) and of the limits to that secularization are to be found in the changes in the value system of that society, brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the consequent class division of English society. That moral and social change is consequent on the decline of religion is false. The causes of moral and social change have lain in the same urbanization and industrialization that produce secularization. The efforts of the "death of God" theologians, or of Tillich, or of Bultmann or Bonhoeffer at translating religious language for a secular world are irrelevant because modern social structures no longer mirror a religious cosmology. "There is nothing which Tillich affirms as a professed theist. . . which anyone need deny who denied the whole meaning and purpose of life must be found within secular society."<sup>3</sup>

One result, MacIntyre says, has been the "religion of the enclave," the religion in which a remnant develops a sect within some form of earnest religious life with community. One might call it the communion that prays together, the fellowship that shares Sabbath together, but that congregation is not a work community, nor is it a functioning body that expresses responsibility for a total existence. It is a mode of social involvement in which one is offered a spiritual intensity in separation from the total rhythm of life where the sacred is severed absolutely from the profane. It might well feature a synagogue membership which meets together on the Sabbath for two hours, a very concentrated two hours; but in which the rest of the week has no relationship to what these hours were about.

Congregants have said to me, "I love coming; I find it very peaceful; it works much better than the golf course." They were saying: "I seek spiritual peace. I seek some way of getting free from the enormous busy-ness that I am dragged into in terms of very demanding effort. I seek moments of quiet!" So the function of the Sabbath or the purpose of the synagogue is to provide for anxious man moments of repose and tranquility. The synagogue's role is to act as a corrective to man's serious life. It is a moral holiday. It is an oasis in a desert of busy-ness and anonymity, where one can escape the impersonality of the supermarket. Men seek some sort of lived community. "It's nice to come here. People know me by my name."

---

<sup>1</sup> See Gershom Scholem on the contrast between the Jewish and Christian approach to Messianism: "Towards an Understanding of the Messianic Idea in Judaism," in: G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, New York, 1971, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> A.C. MacIntyre, *Secularization and Moral Change*, London, 1967.

<sup>3</sup> o.c., p. 69

There was a period in the 1930's and 1940's when large synagogues were thought to be the answer to the Jewish entrance into modernity, and we built big synagogues in America. What we have found now is that these large synagogues are failing and people want smaller congregations where they know each other. Not only the moments of prayer are important. Central also are the times when people gather for fellowship, have cake and wine together, and *talk*. Often the food people share when they have a *kiddush* seems more important than the services, because what they are really seeking is human contact. Thus, one function of religion in response to secularization is to propose an alternative form of leisure. In synagogues, one might enjoy topics such as "Satisfaction on the Sabbath: A Prescription for Boredom" or "Swimming in the Ocean of the Talmud." Religion's role is, in MacIntyre's sense, to give up the world and to provide a place for the weary to rest.

For such a refuge to endure, however, someone has to say that a man who does not have this rest is going to die. Thus one religious duty is to point out secular man's inadequacy to provide needed peace and meaningful leisure. Indeed, religion as the enclave, where separation from the profane is so wide and clear, increasingly prospers by pointing out the failures of secular efforts. Sermons are parasitical on the ill-conceived consequences of technology, the tragedies of the birth control pill; and the more one can emphasize the failures of contemporary man, the more he feels religion has a place. The more life is miserable in the secular world, the more people will say, "I need the synagogue." Sermons accordingly deal with all the failures of modern medicine, all the malfunctions of industrial society. They deal with ecology. "See what modern man is doing with the environment. Heed what modern man is doing with medicine. Look what modern man has done with sex." And the more we find out . . . Ah! Any failures lately? "Oh! I've got a sermon; my speech is clear; they've just discovered that 100,000 fish die from the factory. Marvelous! I have a whole month to go on." Scour the newspaper to discover disaster; and then offer that lovely, serene, clean environment where congregants sing, and eat biscuits together. On a Sunday, or a Saturday (if traditional, you must have it on Sunday; but if Reformed, you can do it on Saturday afternoon), hold a picnic in the country, where the families come and share cookies, and other little delicacies. And keep in mind the Breakfast Club, the "Minyonaires" Club, and all the significant forces that shape history.

The overpowering LORD of history, who demands to be manifested on earth, is given a weekend, a day in the world: OK, You have a place in history; we offer You the Sabbath." Again a characterization of the Retreat. It is not a retreat into eternity within the self, or a mystic inner depth of religious experience, but is some sort of enclave, of sect, a framework for alienated religious community.

### *Criticism*

This easily leads to a third response to secularization, which is to bestow upon religion the function of majestic social criticism. Religion than can live off the margins of history. Because isolation and aloofness enable it to condemn man's *hubris*, re-

ligion thrives on its own alienation. It revels in its estrangement from the material and social forces that shape modern thought. In other words, modern religion can evacuate its role in history; it can give to Caesar what is Caesar's; it can allow the social collective world to understand itself outside of any covenantal and historical destiny.

Here one does not encounter the transcendent God who seeks embodiment in human affairs, but he posits a transcendent god who remains transcendent and therefore creates religious alienation. Utter transcendence demands the inability to translate the spiritual vision within the lived history of man. Thus an absolute otherness manufactures the mystic moment, or else the thorough divorce of the sacred from the profane, or else it constructs for religion the mission of pointing out the failures of man. It assumes "the prophetic role of religion," and is disparaging always of what "kings" are trying to do.

But we forget that the prophet is serious only because the king is anointed by God; and if the king is not anointed by God, then the prophetic critique is irrelevant. The prophetic burden is to be regarded only because God seeks His kingdom in history. Therefore to use the prophets as a means of validating alienation is a perversion of biblical responsibility.

## A HALAKHIC APPROACH

In the light of these three responses, I will suggest a different way in which men can confront the secularization process. This approach will stem from the fact that in Judaism a tension complements the dialectic between the sacred and the profane. "Six days," God says, "shall you labour, and the seventh day shall be a rest unto the LORD your God."

### *Creators*

God in the Bible creates in the first six days. Genesis does not begin with the Sabbath, with a God who first blesses the seventh day and makes it holy. Rather, Genesis begins with a God who creates and is active for six days during the week. The God of the Bible is a will-ful God who shapes His environment. God fashions a finite being who in human freedom and volition profoundly images his Creator. Man's ability to structure his environment, not always to respond passively to his surroundings, to feel adequate in reaction to a world that is often indifferent to his needs, not necessarily to be overwhelmed by nature, but to construct a human dwelling place in an often impervious, mute, and uncaring cosmos, to understand that one does not have to bow submissively before unalterable forces: these are hallmarks of the dignity of religious man who is created in the image of God, who acts and makes and forms a material world. Passive contemplation of nature is not the desideratum of the biblical tradition. "Conquer, struggle with nature, alter her, shape her, make her responsive to your human need." This sense of man has been

articulated at great depth by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik.<sup>4</sup> He argues that as God is a Creator, so must men create.

The Midrash tried very hard to show that the beginning and the end of the Torah are filled with practical divine love. In the beginning God is a tailor: He sews garments for Adam when he is ashamed of his nakedness. In the beginning God is a matchmaker: He takes Eve to Adam. (The Midrash adds that after creating the world, God busies Himself arranging marriages, and that finding a suitable match is as difficult as parting the Red Sea. *Midrash Rabbah, Bereshith* LXVIII, 4; *Vayyikra* VIII, 1; *Bemidbar* III, 6.) In the end He launched the burial society and He buried Moses. (In Hebrew the most noble society is called the "*chevrah qedishah*," the society that dealt with burial and the need of the dead. Cf. *Midrash Rabbah, Bereshith* VIII, 13; also *Sotah* 14a).

God is always portrayed in human moral terms: one must imitate His ways. Similarly, to Soloveitchik the story of creation is not merely a description of cosmological drama, it is above all a normative model to be imitated. As God is a Creator, so shalt thou be a creator. Creation is not a prerogative that exists only for God. In other words, man does not properly express his religious consciousness by faceless acceptance. Passivity, guilt, and fear of adequacy is not what biblical man feels. Man is bequeathed a mandate to shape the world, he is given the Torah, he is bestowed a halakhah, he is accorded a mission. Man is burned by his task, but he is not frightened by it. The biblical sense of adequacy is not a negation of religious consciousness. Praiseworthy humility does not mean self-negation; but it rather preserves a sense of adequacy without arrogance. Modesty was the mark of a revolutionary prophet, who foiled kings, who gave a law, who shaped a community, who argued with God.

Moses was called the humblest of men. That seems a strange epithet; perhaps the last thing expected of him. A man might picture Moses standing up before Pharaoh, or on Mt. Sinai above the camp; is he not the opposite of humble? On the contrary, to know your great worth and yet to be not seduced into arrogance is a challenge of modesty. To know that I am competent, to know that I can shape and build, and yet to know that even though I am adequate, I stand before the Mighty God in my adequacy, this is humility. The challenge of humility is to build a dignified, able man; not to revel in man's failures.

Biblical man does not want to sit passively and watch a child die of leukemia. Man does not wish to recline comfortably accepting hunger as the inevitable fate of half the population of the world. One stands challenged to defeat irresponsive nature and to provide food for the mass population; to erect societal structures in which the pious do not propose that one's place in the social stratum in which he finds himself has been decreed to endure by God's immutable law. Biblical man will not

---

<sup>4</sup> Joseph B. Soloveitchik, "The Lonely Man of Faith," in: *Tradition*, VII, 2 (Summer 1965) pp.5-67.

offer now a peaceful eternity in the midst of a jungle of economic depravity. What he will profer is an understanding of the human capacity to work in the world in which men are responsible. One of the profound spiritual significances of the technological secularization process is that it has increased man's sense of responsibility.

### *An Instrument of God*

I am responsible now because I have the means to alleviate so much of human deprivation. Because of television, I cannot plead that I do not know of the hunger that there is in the world. Technology has brought me into contact with the world and I can no longer live indifferently to that which is beyond my immediate environment. The world constantly invades my private self. Industrialization has made universalism not an abstract, pious hope, but a concrete experience. A person is not responsible if he is not given a means to cope with that responsibility. Technology has expanded man's obligations, because scientific know-how has given a sense that he is able to cope with them. God chooses not to give mankind a mandate to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth, to build a human world where love and understanding prevail without at the same time giving the power to meet that responsibility. Therefore I view secularization as an instrument of God. It is a social phenomenon ordained by God to demonstrate to modern man his own responsibility in building a community. Technological consciousness (as opposed to certain descriptions of it or reactions against it) *takes the world seriously*. Technology demands divine provision and human enactment: it is the incarnation of God's program into history.

Revelation is a task: the disclosing of God is *mitzvah* (commandment). It is not a spiritual withdrawal from the world but it is a rooting of man deeper into the world. Revelation is encounter with a mission to hallow the world, to sanctify the earth, and to make holy the community: "And I shall be sanctified in the midst of Israel." Why does the Creator God, why does the LORD who is all-adequate unto Himself seek to be manifested in the lived history of my own community? This is the great mystery of the biblical tradition. Central to the biblical world view is the understanding that God seeks community in history as the arena in which He is to be revealed.

Something about the biblical description indicates that it is really painful for God that He chose man. If He had chosen the way of Aristotle, he would live in serene peace, contemplating himself and enjoying that contemplation. Or if God sought instant perfection, he would never have created history. If He sought mathematical flawlessness, he should have remained in the mystery of his own adequacy and self-sufficiency. What is fundamental is that the Living God, as opposed to the god of Aristotle, in fact chooses history and chooses community; and because He desires a human society, He understands that man will fail. The role of the prophet is to enjoin mercy for man's failures before God. The function of the religious man is to plead with God to accept fragile man. He who wishes a God of revelation, who

wants the Torah on Sinai, must be prepared to live with man's perennial capacity to sin.

Sinai therefore reveals an anthropology in which God is present with man no matter how often he fails. One response to secularization is accordingly that men of religion should feel pain and weep at human misfortune while encouraging secular man to be proud with what he started and not to lose his nerve. It is interesting that the giving of the Torah takes place in the desert, where man is constantly exposed to defeat. If a man's model is Sinai, if the giving of the Torah is his paradigm of sacred history, then what he sees is a task, a burden with an awareness that man can fail, does fail, and will fail. In other words, Sinai does not suggest a romantic conception of man; Sinai points to real men who disappoint, who seek water and bread; and if they do not have water and bread they are prepared to give up their sacred mission.

A significant midrash elaborates on the time when Moses came down from the mountain. The people were dancing around their strange god. In accordance with prophetic metaphor, Sinai has been described as the wedding canopy, and right under the canopy Jews were already indulging themselves with strange lovers; they were whoring at their wedding. Moses had been serving as the intermediary arranging the wedding contact and returning from the negotiations, he beheld Israel's wantonness. What did Moses do? He ripped up the marriage contract so that the date of the wedding should not be held as evidence (*Midrash Rabbah, Shmot XLIII, 1*). The prophetic leader does not say, "Oh, worthless rabble!" Rather he tried to protect the congregation. He does not condemn man's weakness, but implored God to allow man to continue the task, irrespective of his infirmity. "You want to destroy Israel? You must not, because You have acted in history and You have liberated them from slavery."

There is a double role then for the spiritual man. On one level, he defends his fellows in their failures, yet he is unbending in his demands. He never becomes patronizing. When he speaks to God, he says: "God, do not break Your promises to our forefathers. Do not destroy Your witness to the nations. Continue Your covenant relationship even after this." But when he talks to others, he does not condescend like a beneficent father: "Oh, my child, don't worry. I'll take care of you." Rather, when he speaks, he is all demanding. He tells them: Stand up; gird your swords; be men." Strict in his demands, he perceives with the eyes of justice. At the same time he communicates with the vision of love when trying to encourage man to continue, even in his failure. Love and justice merge together. His love is: "Because the doors of Return are open, you can stand up again." His justice: "When you do stand up, I don't patronize you. I make demands."

The response of Rabbinic Judaism to defeat is, "You can start again." When halakhic man sees technological man falling, he is not to say, "*Hubris*; he can't do without God." On the contrary, religious man must weep with the failure of secular man, must be embarrassed by his inability; must feel the pain of his ill-success; and must encourage him not to give up that which has been right and powerful – indeed

beautiful – in the technological revolution. Biblical description is not nobility; the biblical description is earnestness. It is serious, and not romantic. Man stands in judgement for what he does every day of the week, not only for what he does in his community of retreat.

The Sabbath can come only after man feels responsible to build this world. The function of Judaism is to teach us how to live for six days during the week, and the mission of Israel is to restore six days of the week into the religious life. Israel returns the secular into the sacred. The holy in Israel is really the task of every day. – We shall consider this in more detail in Section III.

### *Creatures*

There is this dialectic: there are the six days of the week and then comes the Sabbath, and the Sabbath is really the way man learns to understand his willfulness as a gift of God and not as an absolute right. The Sabbath means standing before God not as creator, but as creature. The Sabbath is the way man learns to accept his creatureliness.

Reb Hoshaya describes the grandeur of man in *Midrash Rabbah* (Bereshith VIII, 10). He wrote that when the Holy One, Blessed Be He, created Adam, the ministering angels mistook him and wished to exclaim “Holy!” before him. What does this resemble? A king and a governor were sitting in a chariot, and the subjects wished to say to the king “Sovereign!” but they did not know which one was (king). What did the king do? He pushed the governor out of the chariot, and then they knew who was the king. “Similarly,” said Reb Hoshaya, “when the Lord created Adam, the angels mistook him (for a divine being, indeed for God). What did the Holy One, Blessed Be He, do? He caused sleep to fall upon him, and then all knew he was (but) man. . . .” This profound midrash communicates the intimation that man who is created in the image of God might deign to usurp God. Man with will, power, and intelligence can through his volition and strength control existence. But man discovers his humanity in sleep. By this we mean that man understands his personhood when he is able to live without conscious control. Sleep is symbolic of a state of consciousness in which the world is not perceived as an object to be compelled, but in which God’s creation is rather an environment where a man can rest quietly and integrate within his own reality.

The dialectic between control and power as against withdrawal and rest is in fact the dialectical tension that a religious man faces as he encounters and embraces a technological universe. Even willful man can sleep. Sleep is a condition of peace in which I do not see the environment as that which I have to wrestle and rule. In this profound sense, man becomes human when he discovers sleep. Without rest, without reflection, man’s own adequacy might encourage self-idolization. There is always the risk that a mortal will think of himself as a god. The danger of biblical monotheism is that man might seek to replace God, because he has such nobility and such might. Because human beings are given so great a task in history, there is always the possibility that man will seek to replace his Maker.

Thus right after God creates, He sets the model of the creator-man: He institutes the Sabbath, in which the Creator-God ceases functioning in relationship to nature as a shaper and as an outside will. God's will is to be a part of the rhythm of that which He has created. Similarly man on the Sabbath does not stand like Prometheus against an alien world. Rather on the Sabbath he finds a relationship in the world — not on the basis of subject-object and not on the basis of a will which seeks to rule. On the Seventh Day man discovers that he exists together with the world, and that both he and the world participate as creatures of God. Therefore a mortal experiences on the Day of Rest his limits. Out of this finitude, he can express his adequacy, not as a threat to God but rather in a mandate received from God. There is therefore this complementary relationship of involvement and withdrawal. The Sabbath shapes my consciousness as creature; it teaches me that I am not God. Technological man is always going somewhere, always moving, constructing. On the Sabbath man learns that he does not stand before an entirely alien environment which he must incessantly shape and build and control.

This double dimension of assertiveness and receptiveness, of willfulness and quiet, comprises a tension in the spiritual view of biblical theology, and I think also rabbinic theology. The two contrasting principles emerge as *hesed* and *din*. In another midrash, God in the beginning thought to create the world on the principle of *din* (or the principle of justice). But He saw that the world cannot endure with *din* alone, and He therefore introduced the principle of *hesed* (lovingkindness). (*Midrash Rabbah*, Bereshith VIII, 4, 5.) *Din* is the principle of justice and of will. *Din* is the foundation upon which man is called to act; and the impartial response of God to man is based upon man's own achievement. *Din* suggests not a universe of mercy, but a world in which man asserts his own dignity; the honor of a person who can act. This active aspect is the dimension of self-dignity, self-worth, and self-fulfillment through the utilization of human capacities. Rashi asserts that this was the ultimate principle of the universe: "Originally it entered His mind to create the world in the attribute of Justice (*din*)" (Rashi on Genesis 1:1).

We can compare the principle of *din* with the principle of activism and willfulness. Justice and will are complementary categories which suggest that man shoulders responsibility. Phenomenologically, will and responsibility interact together in a symbiotic nexus. But what does the midrash say in a deeper sense? It suggests that the principle of responsibility, of activism and of *din* would only ravage were there not the principle of love which acts irrespective of the person's own action. In order for *din* not to turn into a demonic force, there must be an element of love, a principle of receiving without acting, which counterbalances man's own willfulness. Ontologically, then, we need grace or *hesed* in order to create a human being whose own sense of willfulness is not suicidal. What does the principle of *hesed* indicate? It is a phenomenon in which man learns that there is an aspect of reality which extends beyond his own action. There is a dimension in which he receives beyond that which he himself puts into the universe. One has to receive in order to feel that the object of his desire is not illusory. In some way he has to have a presentment of the unconditional, in order to live with the conditional.

That is why there must be the double dimension of *hesed* along with *din*: a sense that men live in a universe abundant to them even if they themselves do not initiate. Men in the modern world of technology must experience both dimensions: the realization of responsibility and of activism, and yet a further recognition that the universe and people are responsive irrespective of a man's own action. The *hesed* principle enables the principle of *din* to be creative. Again, the Talmud in *Kiddushin* 36a discusses whether one is called a child only when one acts like a child, or whether there is endurance of the covenantal relationship of child even when one does not deserve it. Rabbi Meir says, "*bein kakh u-bein kakh 'atem keru'im banim.*" (they are called children even though they do not act like children). The fact of *din*, which is a principle of law and of responsibility, is balanced, according to Rabbi Meir, by the fact that we are called children even when we do not behave as children should. We can rely on a response of Divine love. There is demand and love; but a son of the covenant is called a child even if he does not fulfill the law. Therefore the principle of *din* and *hesed* arises not only in ontology, not only in the psychology of man, but also in the theology of law.

As suggested, the dialectical tension between assertiveness and receptiveness expresses itself similarly in the doctrine of the *Sabbath*. The interaction between *hol* and *kodesh*, between the sacred and the profane, between the "six days shall you labor" and Rest also communicates both the assertive or *din* principle, and the *matanah* or *hesed* or gift principle where nature is seen not as an object to be controlled but is instead understood as a universe to be perceived (or in Buberian terms, as a "thou"). the dialectical tension between *kodesh* and *hol*, the Sabbath and the week, suggests technological man and man who yields his incessant need to control. With the halakhic principle of the holy on the Sabbath, wherein nature is transformed from an "it" to a "thou," and wherein the creation is good irrespective of its service to man, we find a profound affirmation of the value of existence outside the anthropocentric dimension. The world exists not as an object for man's gratification.

Often when the sun was setting and I walked to *synagogue* Friday nights, it was as if the flowers in the garden where we lived in Montreal would say to me: "For six days you can cut me and you can use me; today you and I are both creatures of God: you cannot pluck me from the ground, you cannot shape me. You and I are both God's creation. At sunset I become a 'thou,' and I have the right to exist irrespective of my service to you." I stand by silently unto nature, not as an enemy that I control, but as a creature of God. I discover that I am man and not the LORD. The Sabbath heals the grandiosity of will often met in technological man.

Once a young Reform rabbi remarked "Sabbath begins when I am ready. When I tell my family I want to recite the kiddush, that's when Sabbath begins. It might be at about 8 o'clock in the evening, because I feel that is a good time." I said, "Rabbi, you are fortunate. I am always racing against time for the Sabbath. I'm too busy working, writing, or with something to do, I wish I could say to the Sabbath: 'I need another two hours. Please wait.' Suddenly the sun is beginning to set, and I

say, 'Hold it, Hartman is busy!' The law should be flexible and should grant more time. 'Understand that I need to finish my chapter.' I'm fighting as hard as Joshua, and want to hold the sun back. But nature doesn't seem to care how I feel about this. The sun says, 'Hartman, you can plan all you want, I'm moving.' " And he moves. As he sets there is a sudden awareness on my part that I cannot control the holy. I do not decree the time God wishes the Sabbath to begin. I have to respond to that which is outside me. While the sun sinks silently and relentlessly, God says, "David, you are no more a creator, but a creature."

If you look at a Jewish calendar, you must think the Jews are insane. The Sabbath starts at 4:12, or at 5:12, or 6:17; from 4 to 8 o'clock. Jews are confused, or they have no way of organizing reality properly. They could easily have said Sabbath begins at 6:00 in a normal and regular way. Did God give mathematics in order to calculate bizarre timetables? But the holy does not begin when one wants it to: the holy comes to man regardless of whether he is prepared. The concept of the rhythm of *Kedushat Shabbat* is not dependent upon man sanctifying the *Sabbath*. The *Sabbath* comes independent of man's decision.

When the Sabbath goes away, Jews recite the prayer on the cup of wine. We light the candle, and candle light signifies moving from the holy to the profane: the *havdalah*, the separation service. We put our hands by the flame, and I have a silent prayer that says, "These hands, which God gave me in order to create, must be a source of good in the world." Fire, which is a source of creation, is given back to me by God as a gift to use and to shape and to build. Every Jew in his daily services counts the following way: Today is the first day to the Sabbath, the second day to the Sabbath, the third day to the Sabbath . . . The days are not given names like Sunday, Monday, Tuesday. The units are not closed; they are not discrete particles of time which point to no future. On the contrary, you count *yom rishon*, *yom sheni*. There is a progression. The days are open; they move. One day leads toward something else — not isolated atoms of time, but *yom rishon le-shabbath*, *yom sheni le-shabbath*. . . . (the first day unto the Sabbath, the second day unto the Sabbath). When halakhic man exists in *hol*, when he dwells in the profane, he lives with the consciousness that the ordinary has meaning, because it points to the direction of the holy. There is unity and interaction between the sacred and the profane: the attempt to have the sacred reinforce the profane, and the effort to create within the daily a sense of direction as opposed to separate units which lead to nothing. The Sabbath introduces anticipation and aspiration into the struggle of the everyday. On Sabbath there is the prayer: "This is the song of the day of Sabbath"; this is the song that points to that which will come, when the world will be a complete Sabbath. In other words, the Sabbath and the week train men to live with hope — a hopefulness permeated by a realistic appreciation of man and the unpredictable power of human freedom. The Sabbath can inspire without being compelled to ground its vision of time upon notions of historically necessary progress.

The natural rhythm of the holy, the cosmic cycle of the sacred brings the Sabbath

of the seventh day, and it acts as a balance in the assertive will of the “*sheshet yamim ta'avod*” (“Six days you shall labor”) in active man. One must recognize, however, that the holy does not itself remain an abstract antithesis. There is a dialectical sense in which there arises even within the *kodesh* a movement from natural man as God’s creature to historical man as God’s covenantal partner. Not only *hol* is assertive, but man can be assertive even in holiness. The sacred for natural, creaturely man is holiness as a gift; holiness for redeemed historical man becomes as well willful cooperation with God, and acting as a person who himself introduces the holy. This is reflected in the *kiddush*. On the *Sabbath* Jews indeed submit to God’s timetable and recite, “*baruch ‘ata ha-shem mekadesh ha-shabbat*” (Blessed are You, O LORD, who makes holy the Sabbath). But on the historical festivals we assert the prerogative of Leviticus 23 (verses 21 and 39), and we ourselves inaugurate the festival and proclaim the holy celebration, declaring, “*baruch ‘ata ha-shem mekadesh yisrael ve-ha-zmanim*” (Blessed are You, O Lord, who makes holy Israel and the seasons). In other words, Israel herself becomes a holy people; a co-partner, and herself a source of the holy. (Cf. *Rosh Hashanah*, *Yerushalmi*, I, 3; also *Pesachim* 117b.) The Sabbath and the festivals anticipate a redeemed history.

There similarly remains a dialectic of *din* and *hesed* in the eschatological realm, in the realm of hope. In Israel’s tradition on one level it is said, “*dayo le-avel she-ya’ amod b’evlo*” (“It is sufficient for a mourner to keep his mourning”). When speaking of *ge’ulah* or redemption, Shmuel said that redemption will come through suffering. Sorrow is redemptive. Redemptive suffering is a principle of *hesed*. In contrast, Rav and R. Eliezer said in effect, “*Ge’ulah* or redemption comes only with *teshuvah* (repentance),” which is the principle of will, which is the principle of *din* (*Sanhedrin* 97b). *Teshuvah* calls for human effort; repentance demands response in ordinary time commensurate with what a man has done and has become. Thus the Rav position was the principle of *din*; the Shmuel doctrine was the principle of *hesed*. Maimonides speaks very interestingly in *Hilkhot Teshuvah* of a subtle balance between *hesed* and *din*. He says, with Rav, that *ge’ulah* depends on *teshuvah*, meaning on the principle of will. Therefore *ge’ulah* depends on *teshuvah*, and therefore on the principle of willfulness. But then does everything depend upon man? You might become terrified by the responsibility that your own willfulness introduces. Maimonides ends, however, by saying that Jews have a *havtaḥah* or a divine promise. From this we have security. What is the divine promise? Is it that no matter what we do there will be redemption? — No. The divine promise is that in the end Israel will do *teshuvah*. There is a promise which is the principle of grace or *hesed*, and there is *teshuvah* which is the principle of *din* or of will acting together in the historical eschatology. How does one experience redemption? Not through a leap into apocalyptic time. Maimonidian Jews are trained to be messianists, not by leaving the profane but by living within it and attempting to show how the modern can embody the secular as well as the holy.

Summarizing these points of Jewish theology, then, *din* or *hesed* can be organized under the ontology of creation. *Shabbat* and *hol*, the holy and the week, belong in the nature realm. In the legal realm there is the *din* principle, the covenant based on

law; and yet there persists the unconditional principle of love irrespective of whether you obey the law. Thus, revelation contains as well the tension between assertiveness, responsibility and love. In the eschatological realm and in the messianic realm we find the dialectical tension between *din* (which is the principle of *teshuvah*) and *hesed* (in which suffering is itself redemptive.) In those three dialectical models coming out of creation, revelation, and redemption, one can find a key to the experience of the Jewish people. Throughout history, Jews have lived in these dialectical tensions, and in attempts to weave these dimensions. We have lived on in the cycle of the week: we have had only six days during the week, and we have had the Sabbath. Therefore, we have known that we belong to the world, because we have known that God wants "Six days shall you labour." He wants the six days to be in His service. We therefore have known that at one time we would return to history, as a community, and live in secular time.

## RETURN TO THE LAND

Of incalculable import in Judaism's recent return to history is the restoration of the fundamental significance of *hol* (secular) to *kedushah* (holiness). Often religion is equated with offering men a perception of the holy. We have noted that religion can become a moral holiday for men who seek retreat from the troubles of life. Judaism's significance in Israel is that she restores the potential spirituality of the everyday; her task is to return the tension between the *kodesh* and the *hol* to its fullness. Holiness is not indicated by withdrawal from reality, but sanctity is reflected in the way men deal with the everyday. The right to experience the holy comes only after man has accepted the challenge of six days: "*Sheshet yamim ta'avod ve'asita kol-melakhtekha.*"

The difference between Judaism in the land of Israel and Judaism in the Diaspora is that Israel demands that *Judaism be significant as a way of life for a total community all the time*. Judaism cannot serve simply as a way of finding a retreat or a moment of protest against a world of estrangement. Israel encounters spiritual alienation and religious compartmentalization by giving Jews a home where they are responsible for what they do and the institutions they build. Judaism ceases to be the prophetic critic of the market place of others. The challenge was either to choose a Jerusalem in heaven which we meet in our prayers, or to live in a Jerusalem in which we are responsible seven days during the week. Where does God dwell? Does He dwell in a mystic rapture, or does He dwell in a living community? The return of secular Zionism is the return of the LORD to history, with all the problematics.

### *Concretion*

Often religion is equated with lofty phrases. There is great danger that man prefers to repose in a world of beautiful expressions rather than to test his speech and its claims by the concrete. Frequently one of the most serious criticisms of religious

language is that it refuses to be falsified. On-lookers repeatedly encounter the theologian who qualifies, and qualifies again, and again qualifies, until after super-qualifications of the hundredth level, he has said nothing. But there remains a towering purity. A decision not to test out by life is a decision to be safe, but also to be vacuous. In one sense, Judaism returns to the concrete in order to uncover her weaknesses, in order to be vulnerable, in order to ascertain what we Jews are lacking. A man cannot accept the burden of political power if he seeks always to be aseptic. Reality tests convictions, and in the testing out of reality, one also discovers the weaknesses and delusions of unproven ideals. In her return, Judaism has been compelled to face actuality. The decision has been that Judaism, or spirituality, should abandon the realm of verbal purity.

Jews have often lived on the margins of history. So many have been intellectuals students, writers, protesters, outcasts. George Steiner or others say, "The Jews should be the critique of history and live on the margin, without power." It is not difficult to be pure when you have not had your hands in the ground. It is easy to be the conscience of the world if you did not have the problems of having to deal with the concrete. Jews have abandoned being abstract consciences born from weakness. They desire to speak from the concretion of life, and to see if in the actual, Judaism is capable of revealing its strength. Israelis are now exposed to the physical consequences of being responsible for a *total culture*, with all that it involves. We have chosen to get our hands dirty, we have resolved to let Judaism grow from the earth. But when an organism is rooted in the soil, it is not always that clean. When a people has to be bodied for a total life, then men will see flaws; they will find political corruptions and will discover poverty. Jews have dared to cease living in verbal abstractions. Now *Time* magazine follows us around. We risk knowing ourselves not by what we say we are, but from what we do. What one experiences in Israel is secular time. The question: "Can we make it holy?" I cannot demonstrate beforehand whether or not we are going to succeed. I do know as a Jew who lives with the event of Sinai: "I have a task, I have a burden to make God live in the world." I pray we shall make it.

### *Opportunity*

The decision of this particular and peculiar people to return to nationhood and to become maximally responsible regarding their own destiny is fraught with an unmeasured significance that may extend even beyond the Jewish people themselves. The return of Judaism to the concrete, the resolve of this people to become visible in history, the choosing of the actual, the willingness to be challenged to embody their spiritual vision within material reality can perhaps create a new perception of the relationship between Judaism and Christianity and Islam in the future. Perhaps there is an opportunity today to heal one of the greatest diseases passed through the generations, where in the Name of One God, men have hated and men have been unable to share and listen to the spiritual vision of the other. Often we have spoken of love. Frequently we have talked of brotherhood. Repeatedly we have been able to invoke "*chaviv 'adam she-nivra' be-tzelem. . . 'elohim*" ("Beloved is man created in the image of God"). — But these are lofty abstractions. The course

of history has tested monotheistic religion and monotheism has failed to reveal in concrete actions the dignity of the stranger. The return of Judaism to her particular homeland; the exposure of a people and their vision to public criticism; the refusal of this community to step out of the international arena and to remain a verbal extraction; the forcing of the world to look on us, in our concreteness, may be the beginning of man's liberation of the violence that has accompanied the spiritual visions of the past. How?

Reducing a subject to an object, viewing him as a datum of manipulation, is the catalyst for aggression. Man heals his aggression when he sees the other as a principal that limits himself. Inter-subjectivity calms the quest for violence and hegemony. A human being is seen as a subject and not only as an object. One is known as a person. In experiencing the principle of limits, the "I" discovers its creatureliness; the "I" unearths its own character when it meets a man who does not want to become an object to be subsumed, transcended, and overcome. Therefore violation is healed when men encounter a subject; when a person engages someone with dignity who stands over against him, he learns his own limitations. The taming of ferocity is through meeting and through inter-subjectivity. Therefore an individual with power can mend the disease of power. Violation is committed not only through physical harm but there is a form of invasion which expresses itself cognitively as well. Epistemological monism, a claim to exclusive authenticity, can equally as well create a form of spiritual violence: infantilizing the other; restricting him to the beholder's religious categories. Not being able to understand a man in the way he understands himself is a form of spiritual murder. To interpret someone else's experience merely from my own philosophic system, my own convenience, and not to appreciate the way he looks at himself, is aggression. Because we do not meet anyone, we meet only the tyranny of our own categories. We encounter objects or fictive instances of our own perception of what spirituality is all about. To heal spiritual tyranny is to enter into the vision of the other, in the way he perceives himself ". . . 'al-tadin 'et haverkha 'ad she-tagia' limkomo.'" (Do not judge the other person until you have come into his place; Pirkei Avot II.5) meaning, "First perceive him from the way he sees himself." This is a genuine meaning of love. This is a true understanding of listening. If an individual hears from his own projection, he has met only himself and never the other.

Israel's return to history, the people resolving to build a Jewish community within this piece of land is in some way saying to the world, "Jews do not live anymore on the margins of history. You cannot reduce us to a spiritual abstraction. Judaism is not an idea. It is a way of life of a people, and you are going to have to see Judaism incarnated not in images and ideals, but in living people." Bodies live in Jerusalem, not ideas. Here then is an opportunity (such as comes rarely in history) to redeem the violence of categorical monism: Christendom is challenged to listen to Judaism not only as the forerunner of Christianity, but also within Judaism's own self-understanding. Islam is called to see more than a vestigial corruption of Semitic monotheism. Hegelians and Marxists, academicians and *Realpolitiker* might hesitate if they in purity direct grandiose schemata onward in confident absorption and annul-

ment. Israel's demand, compelling pluralism and radical particularism, is spiritually redemptive because it heals *hubris*. It humbles grandiosity; it helps to banish the illusion that actuality, or that rationality, or that my own place demands universalizability. It cries for a man's need for a locus.

Secular Zionism has inspired and given Jews the means to return not to a spiritual and secure heaven, but only to an unredeemed and uncertain halakhic earth. We decided to act in history, and not to wait until the end of history. We do not know if our return harbours a messianic renewal. But we know that we are responsible, and must test Judaism as a way of life for our total society. In the thick of struggle, we hope; we still pray *l'shanah ha-ba'ah*. . . (next year. . .) Thus Israel too must hesitate. For concretization into the *hol* restores humility, because it demands knowing ourselves from what we do, and not from what we dream or think. The risk of the profane is its sanctifying power; its vulnerability to falsification. In Leviticus 23, the LORD God says, "I will be hallowed among the people of Israel," but only after the preceding clause, where he warns the people not to profane His Holy Name. It is the concrete that will confirm and bear witness to the truths of the spirit, or the lies of the imagination.